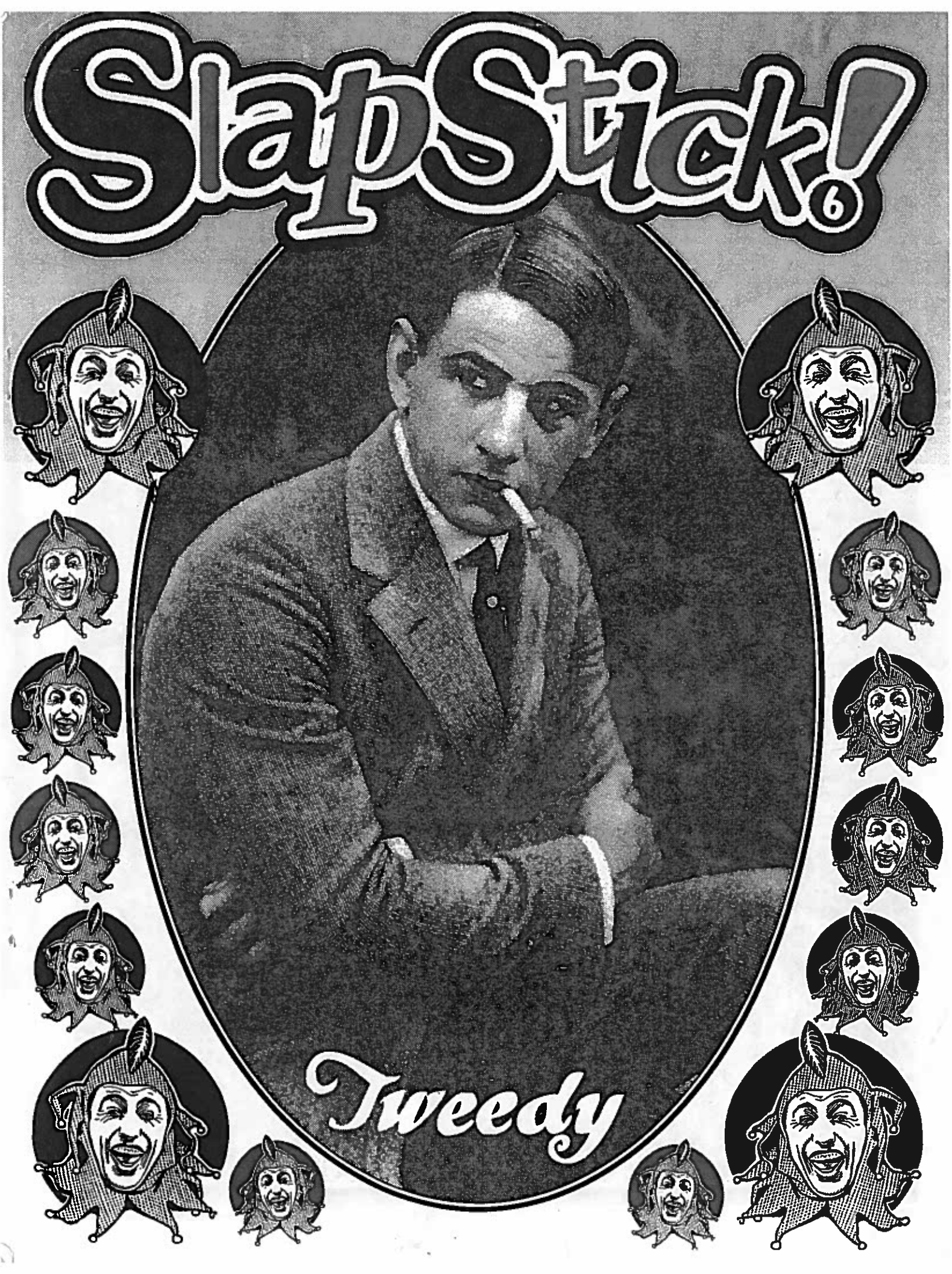
SlapStick! 6



Tweedy

Photos courtesy Cole Johnson

SlapStick! 6

Welcome!

Well here we are once again and now with our sixth and latest issue!!!

Wow, who was to think we'd get this far! It's all due to you, the readers and your support! Thanks so much for all your kind words and suggestions, and keep it coming – we need to hear from each and everyone of you.

First off, let me thank Steve Massa, David L. Smith and Claudia Sassen, Sam Gill, Cole Johnson, Kim Pitylak, etc, for their contributions to this new issue, as well as all the others, without whose help issue number 6 wouldn't have been possible.

After giving it some thought, I've decided to offer subscriptions to Slapstick! All readers now have the opportunity to order up to the tenth issue at our regular rates of $8. each if within the U.S.; $10. each for Canada; and $13. each outside North America. So perhaps you want to take advantage of these prices before postal rates rise as well as avoid the release schedule confusion.

Back issues are completely sold out although I retain the master file copy and can strike new copies at $11. each if mailed within the U.S.; $13. for Canada; and $16. each outside North America. All prices include postage.

Let me encourage advertising. If you have books, videos, memorabilia, or whatever related to early film comedy to sell, why not let your fellow readers know about it? Our advertising rates are very affordable; drop me a line for full information. And I encourage all readers to support our advertisers and to please mention you saw their ad in the pages of Slapstick!

Would you like to help us with stories, articles, photos and/or illustrations for future issues of Slapstick!? If you own original material of any comedy, comedian or comedienne, director or producer, stuntman or propboy, and would you like to see your pieces reproduced in Slapstick!, please get in touch with us! Please help us to live up to the reputation of being the periodical dedicated to the appreciation, documentation and preservation of early film comedy!

Enjoy this issue and hope to see you for lucky number seven! Have a great summer and take care!

Steve

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Steve Rydzewski, 12554 Deerrun Road, Philadelphia, PA 19154, USA e-mail: srydzewski@aol.com

#1: Cover: Ben Turpin; For Arts Sake, Ben Turpin Biography The Early Years by SR (11pgs); "Breakfast with Ben Turpin" 1922 article reprint (2pgs); "Each Fault a Virtue" 1925 Turpin article reprint (1pg); "c/o Ben Turpin, Genius" contemporary appraisal by William T. Sherman (1pg); "The Man Who Directs the Komic Kops – Walter Wright" 1917 article reprint (2pgs); "The Hard-Luck Twins" 1919 Turpin/ Charlie Lynn article reprint (1pg); script: Ben Turpin's Sennett short, "Two Tough Tenderfeet" (7pgs); Madeline Hurlock "The Pathe Vamp" by SR (6pgs). 40 pgs.

#2: Cover: Larry Semon; Turpin part 2 Essanay (5pgs); Script: Sennett-Paramount's Ford Sterling short, "Among Those Present" 1919 (6pgs); "A Flyer in Art" 1923 Lloyd Hamilton article reprint (3pgs); Larry Semon How Many Times Did He Die? An Investigation Into the Possibility of a Faked Death by Claudia Sassen (4pgs); Semon Filmography Part 1 (6pgs); "F. Richard Jones A Master of Comedy" 1921 article reprint (2pgs); Paramount-Sennett Comedies Filmography Part 1 (5pgs). 40 pgs.

#3: Cover: Mary Thurman; Readers letters (2pgs); Turpin part 3 Vogue (5pgs); 1915 letter from Rube Miller (1pg); "A Modest Clown" 1925 Harry Langdon article reprint (3pgs); Mary Thurman bio by Lisa Huber, grand niece of the actress (10pgs); Chaplin Keystone Filmography by Phil Posner (6pgs); The Two Faces of Fritz Schade by Bo Berglund (2pgs); Script: Our Gangs "The Holy Terror" 1929 (6pgs). 40 pages in all.

#4: Cover: Alice Howell; Letters (2pgs); Alice Howell bio & filmography by Steve Massa (8pgs); Eva Nelson by Bo Berglund (1pg); Fred Fishback by Bo Berglund (2pgs); Larry Semon Filmography Part 2 (12pgs) and "Larry in Paperland" (5pgs) by Claudia Sassen; Ben Turpin part 4 Mack Sennett (7pgs). 40 pages in all.

#5: Cover: Lige Conley; Lige Conley bio & filmog by Brent Walker (13pgs); Dick Sutherland bio & filmog by Greg Travis (6pgs); Alice Howell Revisited (additions to his previous story) by Steve Massa; Letters (1pg); Walter Forde bio & filmog by Jean-Jacques Couderc (2pgs); Larry Semon Rediscoveries & Rectifications by Claudia Sassen (4pgs); Script: Laurel & Hardy's "Hats Off" (4pgs). 40 pages in all.

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Tweedy's Tangled Tale

By Steve Massa

In the history of silent film comedy there are many "unknown soldiers" – i.e. once loved performers, respected directors and producers, invaluable gag-writers, etc. – who for whatever reasons have slipped through the cracks into total obscurity. Comedian / animator Charley Bowers is an example of someone who has only recently been rescued from this group, while Stern Brothers comedienne Wanda Wiley and the Danish comedy team of Carl Schenstrom and Harald Madsen (Pat and Patachon) are still neglected. Another whose career is in dire need of re-examination is Marcel Perez.

Perez was one of the earliest European screen clowns and became popular around the world. He came to America in 1915 and worked over here as a comedian, director, and writer until 1927. Along with Max Linder he was one of the few direct links between European and American silent comedy. Unforeseeable events brought an abrupt end to his performing career and shortened his life. Today, despite his prolific output and some surviving films, another twist of fate has caused him to be unjustly forgotten.

He was born Manuel Fernandez Perez in Madrid in 1885. He spent most of his youth in Paris, and grew up in the theatre, clowning in circuses and music halls. According to a 1916 Motion Picture News Studio Directory, entry he was five feet tall, weighed 125 pounds, and started his film career at age fifteen. That would put his debut in 1900, and while perhaps exaggerated, he did appear in films for Pathe, Eclipse, and Eclair in the early 1900's. Titles and information on these early shorts is practically non-existent, but in 1916, when he was filming THE NEAR-SIGHTED AUTO PEDIST for Eagle Films, publicity articles said that it was a remake of THE NEAR-SIGHTED CYCLIST a short he had made for Eclipse which was so popular that "his comedies in Europe, when he was with the old Eclipse company, sold more prints than Chaplin or any other comedian in the business." Think of selling 950 copies of one picture. That's what they did on the other side with Tweedledum's NEAR-SIGHTED CYCLIST. The National Film Archive in London has a copy of THE SHORT-SIGHTED CYCLIST ('07) about a bike messenger who loses his glasses and runs into workmen, horsecarts, shop displays, and anything else in his path before finally driving off a bridge into the river. Although no performers are listed in the museum's information on the short, it's very likely to be the Perez film and, no doubt thanks to the large number of prints sold, it's considered to be one of the earliest surviving Eclipse films.

At this time European comedy films were booming and had progressed from the early little one-joke jests or funny incident films to stories where the comedy came from the performance and character of the main actor. Andre Deed may have been the first star, but he was soon followed by Max Linder, Charles Prince, Ferdinando Guillaume, and many others. These original screen clowns were anarchic creatures that lived to turn bourgeois society upside-down, and practically bounced from scene to scene like rubber balls. Aside from Linder, who had developed his own elegant style, they were pure buffoons with nicknames like Crettinetti and Foolshead to prove it.

In 1910 Perez joined their ranks as Robinet in a series of one-reelers for the Ambrosio Company of Italy. Starring and directing under the name of Marcel Fabre the series was a big hit, and in 1911 eccentric comedienne Nilde Baracchi joined him as Robinette. Many of the Robinet films survive and show that Perez/Fabre had much in common with his fellow Euro-clowns. Like them he was a small man with a large nose, uses the same extravagant gestures and expressions, and shares their sense of surrealism. In ROBINET BOXEUR ('13) he challenges a boxing champ to a match and after training becomes a boxing fool. He knocks his punching bag into orbit and when taking a poke at a photo of his opponent his fist goes through the wall and lambasts his neighbor who is shaving in the next flat. Drunk with power he then runs amok in the streets and makes fatmen explode, innocent pedestrians backflip down the sidewalk, and trolleys fly in reverse with his mighty punch.

Synopsis for other entries like ROBINET INNAMORATO DI UNA CHANTEUSE ('11) (TWEEDLEDUM LOVES A SINGER) and L'ABITO BIANCO DI ROBINET ('11) (TWEEDLEDUM'S WHITE SUIT) suggest that the character's single-minded obsessions leading to absurd extremes was a re-occurring theme for the series. His best known film from this period, AMOR PEDESTRE ('14) (LOVE AFOOT), showcases his sophistication and ingenuity as a director with a clever version of a love triangle soap-opera that is performed entirely by the actor's feet. Perez/Fabre became known around the world, and is still remembered today in Europe for this series. In America and England he was called

Tweedledum, and around 157 entries were produced from 1910 to 1915 when Perez embarked to the United States.

Trade journal items state that he left Europe due to the outbreak of World War I, but whether he had any specific offers here, or just took a chance and came, is unknown. The first American credit that I've located for Perez is as co-director with Allen Curtis on A DAY AT MIDLAND BEACH a October 30, 1915 Universal Joker one-reeler. It also appears that he starred in the film as well since the Moving Picture World synopsis refers to the main character as Tweedledum. His con-nection with Joker must have been very brief for in Jan. of 1916 it was announced:

BUNGLES IN VIM COMEDIES

Commencing Thursday, February 27, Vim comedies will supersede MinA Comedies on the General program. Bungles, the leading and most popular comedian in Europe, was forced on account of the war to cancel his contracts in Europe, and judging from his work in Vim comedies (the first of which will be "BUNGLES RAINY DAY," released on the General program February 10), he promises to soon become as famous and as great a success in this country as he has been abroad – second to none. He plays the leading parts in all his comedies, directs them, and writes his own scenarios. He has made a long contract to appear in Vim comedies."

Moving Picture World 1/15/1916

Bungles is of course "Fernandea Perez, a world famous comedian, recently from Italy, formerly known as 'Tweedledum,' the world famous fun-maker," but the long contract turned into only four shorts – BUNGLES RAINY DAY, BUNGLES ENFORCES THE LAW, BUNGLES ELOPEMENT, and BUNGLES LANDS A JOB. Vim was formed by Louis Burstein, who later helped form King Bee, in the fall of 1915 and turned out one-reelers at an alarming rate. Mostly known today because of the presence of a young Oliver Hardy in the company Vim also featured Walter Stull and Bobby Burns as "Pokes and Jabs," the refined comedies of Harry Myers and Rosemary Theby, Hardy and Billy Ruge as "Plump and Runt," and a player roster that also included Raymond McKee, Kate Price, Billy Bletcher, Ethel Burton, and Helen Gilmore.

Pretty blonde Elsie MacLeod was Perez's leading lady with Oliver Hardy in support. None of the Bungles shorts are known to exist but contemporary reviews were very favorable. Photographs show Perez looking very different than he did as Robinet with a big, bushy moustache and eyebrows. Later items on Perez state that he was very aware of the differences between American and European comedy tastes and spent a great deal of time studying American comedies. At the time of his arrival in the U.S. and employment at Vim Mack Sennett's Keystone Comedies were the rage and the standard to which other slapstick was compared. It's possible that Bungles sprouting of facial hair was prompted by the fact that almost all of Sennett's popular clowns wore huge moustaches, goatees, etc.

After the four shorts Perez moved on. Although fluent in Spanish, Italian, and French he didn't speak any English on arrival here, and later said that he had to direct initially with the help of an interpreter, although he felt much of what he intended was lost in translation. Perhaps the language complications soured his relationship with the company. The Vim films were produced in Jacksonville, Florida, which was a beehive of film activity in the teens. Besides Vim there was Lubin, Jaxon, Gaumont, Klever Komedies, King Bee and Josh Binney Comedies. All were based or had production companies there. After leaving Vim, Perez resurfaced three months later in a new series for another Jacksonville concern, the Eagle Film Company, under the supervision of William J. Dunn.

Eagle released through the Unity Sales Corporation on a states rights basis, which meant that instead of being released on one date nationwide, the film's distribution rights were broken up into different territories and sold individually. For instance the Merit Film Corp might start showing a short on Feb. 15th in Northern New Jersey, where the Liberty Film Renting Co. might buy the rights for the same short a little later and not start showing it in Pittsburgh until June 15th. In addition a states rights company would sell a series of ten or twelve shorts for the year, and usually make half right away. Then they'd complete the rest after a sufficient number of territories had been sold. All of Perez's future starring work would be in states rights series, which often makes it difficult to pinpoint when an individual comedy was actually first released.

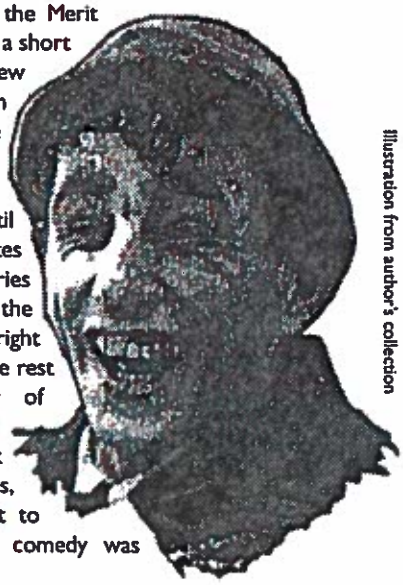


Illustration from author's collection

For Eagle, Perez used the name which he had previously been known in the U.S., Tweedle-dum, and got rid of the facial hair. Returning to his basic Robinet character he's a bungler who's always in trouble, but is wily and clever enough to come up with incredible schemes to get himself off the hook. In LEND ME YOUR WIFE he's broke, and faces the prospect of marrying his landlady Louise Carver (a fate worse than death) to keep from being evicted. Getting a telegram that says his rich uncle is going to visit and bring him a large chunk of money if he is married, Tweedy makes a deal with a buddy to borrow his wife. The buddy comes along to play their servant, and gets upset with the way the uncle treats him and the way that Tweedy gets too friendly with his wife.
Finally uncle catches the wife and servant together in a compromising situation and the jig is up. But Tweedy manages to find his own partner before uncle leaves. Perez's wife Babette was his leading lady, called Tweedledee, and the stock company included Louise Carver, Tom Murray, Rex Adams, and Billy Slade. Husband and wife Murray and Carver would eventually move to California and become silent comedy regulars.

Besides LEND ME YOUR WIFE at least two other titles survive from the total eleven Eagles made. SOME HERO is a hilarious spoof of serial cliffhangers that has Babette kidnapped and tortured by a gang of thugs with Tweedy in hot pursuit to save her. Full of wonderful cartoon gags, at one point when Babette is tied up in a basement that's filling up with water Tweedy drinks all the water and then sprays it out of his mouth like a firehose to douse the crooks senseless. A BUSY NIGHT is a tour-de-force which starts out with Tweedy getting inebriated out on the town. When he goes home and sleeps it off he has a nightmare which is a love triangle melodrama where he plays all the different roles so he not only makes love to himself, but ends up chasing himself from room to room as lover and irate husband. The special effects are wonderfully realized and are seamless, without a visual hitch or an abrupt change in the lighting when the camera had to have been stopped and then re-started. It's a huge leap from the primitive effects of only three years earlier in ROBINET BOXEUR, and looks good even by today's standards.

From the amount of coverage and good reviews in exhibitor magazines, it appears that this series was well-received and popular, but at the end of 1916 Perez finished and moved on again, although the films were probably still being distributed into 1917 due to the way states rights plans worked.

At this point in the saga there are two stray pieces of puzzle that I haven't been able to determine exactly where and how they fit. One is a reference in Rob Stone's excellent book LAUREL OR HARDY that says

Illustration Slapstick! Archives

that Perez joined comedian Harry Myers in forming Encore Pictures in January 1917. Also his 1916 Motion Picture News Studio Directory entry gives his studio address as Encore Pictures, Jacksonville, Florida. Unfortunately I haven't been able to scare up any more info on this. The only other items that turned up around that same time was a reference to Perez making an appearance at the Jacksonville Screen Club Ball on 2/13/1917 along with Oliver Hardy, Victor Moore, and others. The second piece is a Tweedledum short titled TWO OF A KIND ('16) which is listed as a Jockey comedy and distributed by Unicorn. Unicorn was a distribution corporation formed in the spring of 1916 under the direction Ike Schlank which specialized in "one and two reel subjects, dramas, comedies and westerns, intended primarily to be used by exhibitors to balance feature programs." Unicorn released a few of Billy West's early comedies, and lasted in business for about a year. The rest of the cast in TWO OF A KIND is made up of the regular Eagle crew of Babette Perez, Tom Murray, and Rex Adams which suggests that it may have been made after, or was something that Eagle didn't want and sold to Unicorn. It's also possible that it was made by Encore Pictures and released by Unicorn. Hopefully more items will surface and give the full story.

In 1918 and 1919 Perez starred in a two year series of Jester Comedies produced by William Steiner, and shot in Cliffside, NJ. Steiner, known as "Big Bill" was a long-time producer and said in a 1918 Moving Picture World interview – "Here I have been manufacturing film of every description but comedies for the past twenty-three years. Up to a few months ago if you mentioned the word 'comedy' I felt as if I wanted to fight, but now it is different. The work I find very interesting and to my liking. With Twede-Dan as my comedian I have a 'find.' Not only is he an unusual comedian with a style that is original and all his own, but he possesses a dramatic touch that is not often found in a man doing his class of work." Steiner released the shorts on a states rights basis and used what he dubbed the "show you" policy, which was constant screenings of completed comedies for exhibitors to view before they bought the series. Perez and Steiner also altered his screen character's name:

TWEDE-DAN IS TWEEDLEDUM

William Steiner, "Big Bill," says the jig is up – he has been caught with the goods – and confesses that Twede-Dan, appearing in Jester Comedies, is none other than Tweedledum of European fame, prominent in the comedy field several years ago appearing in pictures released under Pathe, Eclipse, Eclaire and Ambrosia brands.

Twede-Dan, as he is now known to the American movie goers, has now been in this country for nearly two years, and has spent the greater part of that time studying the American methods of making pictures and developing a new line of comedy, as shown in the first three Jester releases, "The Recruit," "His Golden Romance," and "All 'Fur' Her." Today we see Tweedledum, alias Twede-Dan, doing things the American way. It was hard at first, but now he is presented as a real American type of actor with a distinctive line of comedy.

Moving Picture World 4/13/1918

Babette Perez returned as leading lady, and his old European partner Nilde Baracchi was brought over to be supporting comedienne. Nilde was given a new last name, Babette, for no other reason that I can see except to create confusion for future biographers between Babette Perez and Nilde Babette. The Moving Picture World of 2/16/1918 announced – "JESTER COMEDIES SIGN NILDE BABETTE" and adds "She is a stranger to America, having arrived recently from Paris, and makes her debut to the American screen public in "The Recruit." Despite this an entry under the name Nilde Baracchi has turned up in the 4/12/1916 Studio Directory that says she's with the Eagle Film Co. Whether or not she appeared in any of the Eagles is unknown but in the 4/16/1918 Moving Picture World the Jester company says – "Nilde Babette, appearing as leading comedienne opposite Twede-Dan in Jester comedies, while a new comer in America is not new in the film art, as she has appeared in many pictures made in France and Italy, and also has acted on the stage in Paris. Miss Babette has only been in this country for a few months, but is fast becoming Americanized, and what little she has seen of America thus far she proclaims as most charming. She has seen a great deal of the war in Europe, and has several brothers in the French army and a number of sisters with the French Red Cross."

The series began in February and, in March, Tommy Regan, who had been assistant director with Pathe, Mittenthal, Pokes & Jabs, and the World Film Company, was engaged as the company's assistant director. In June

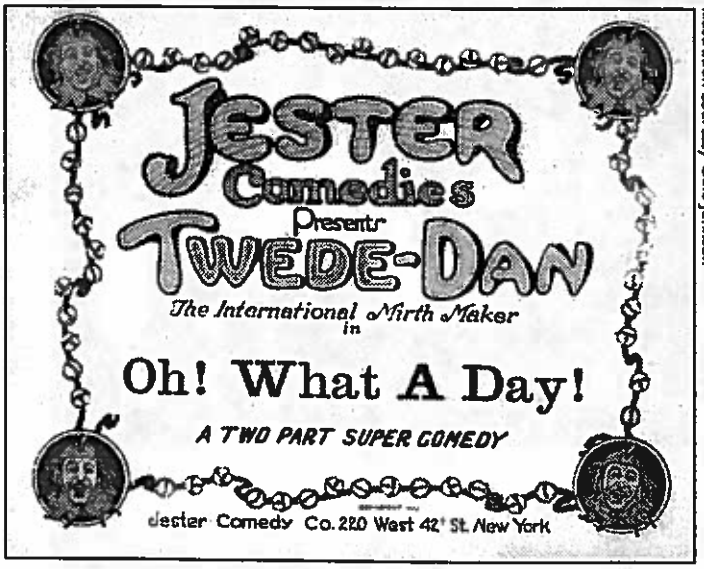
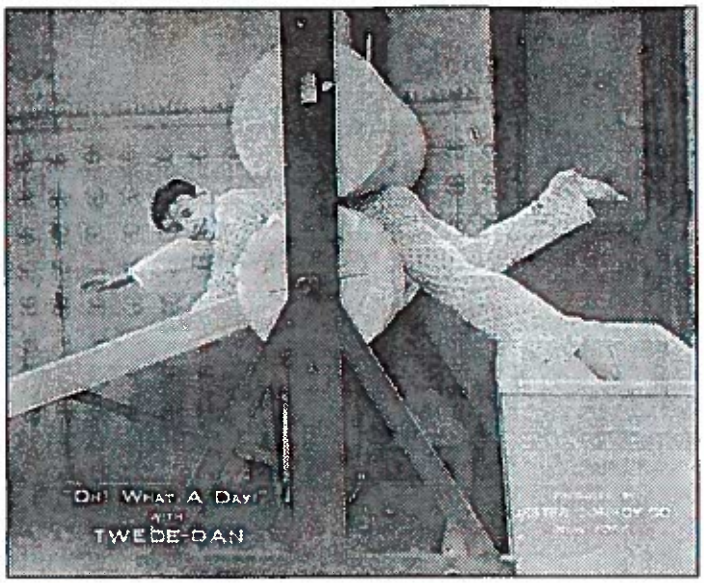


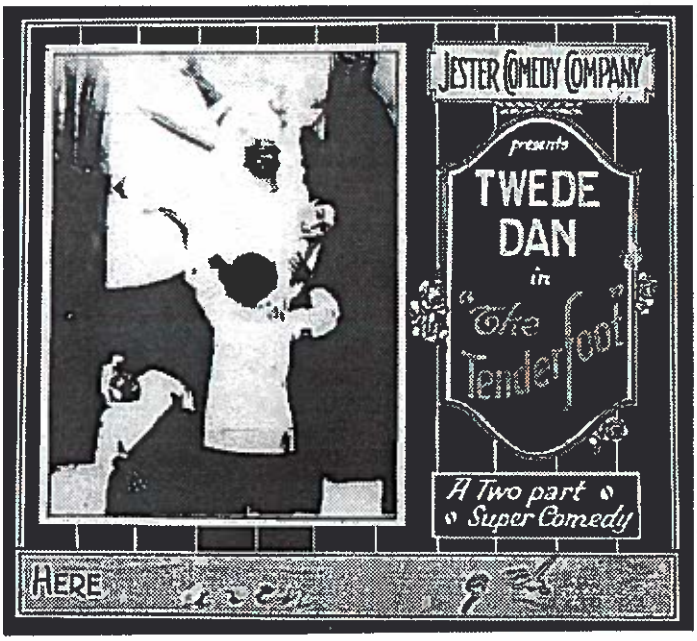
Illustration courtesy Cole Johnson

Illustration courtesy Cole Johnson



Twede Dan **"Oh! What A Day!"**

Illustration: Slapstick! Archives



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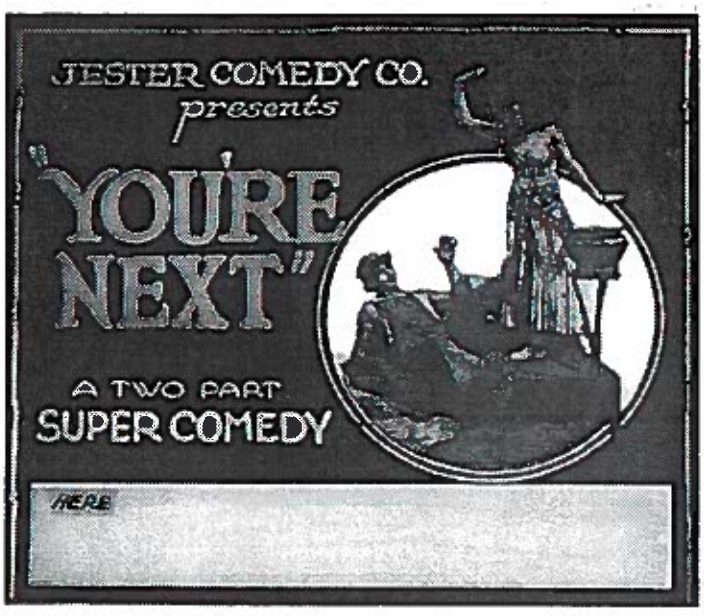

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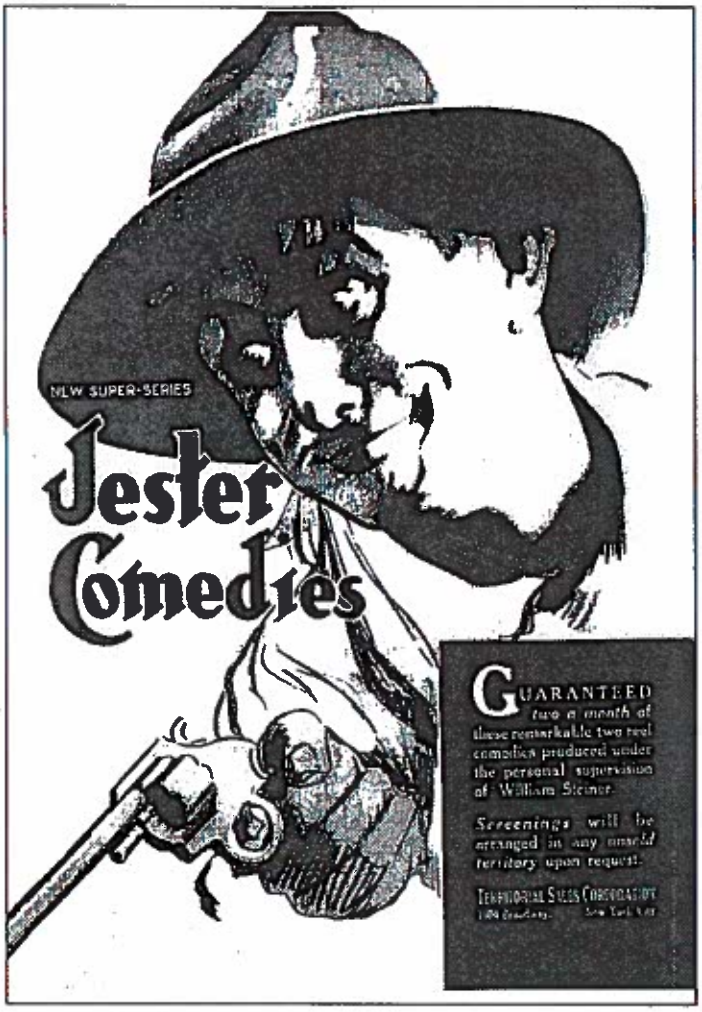

William A. Seiter came in to direct the series. Seiter, well remembered today for his silent comedies with Reginald Denny and Laura LaPlante, and many talking films, came to Jester from directing Chaplin imitator Ray Hughes for Pyramid Comedies and would soon move on to direct Mr. & Mrs. Carter De Haven for producer "Smiling Bill" Parsons at Capitol Comedies. Perez and Seiter would work together again at Universal in 1927.

Reviews for the comedies were very good and Steiner appears to have had great success in selling the series, so much so that in October he announced that he was adding Jimmy Aubrey and Pearl Sheppard in a new group of comedies. A lobby card has turned up with Jimmy Aubrey in a Jester comedy titled THE FATAL FLOWER, but it seems that these additions were short-lived and by 1919 it was only Twede-Dan again.

Quite a few photos, lobby cards, and glass slides have survived from the Jesters, but only a couple of the films themselves are known to exist. The Museum of Modern Art has a chunk of OH, WHAT A DAY ('18) which is about Tweedy and Babette's problems when their car breaks down. Finally they find they're out of gas, so Tweedy uses booze to fuel it. According to reviews the second half of the short details their misadventures at a seaside park. The Library of Congress has an unidentified Jester which I believe is IN THE WILD WEST ('19), where Tweedy is out west and in love with a pretty cowgirl. The local, unattractive lady saloon owner wants him for herself, and ties him up in a shed next to a lit keg of dynamite so he has to choose between her or death. This short gives a good look at Nilde Baracchi as the lady saloon owner. At six feet and 180 pounds, she's incredibly tall and skinny, with a big hawk nose. She's even more eccentric-looking than Gale Henry, with large, almost drawn curls above each ear and in the middle of her forehead.

In the second year of the series, 1919, Steiner is calling his production company Territorial Sales Corporation, and while still doing the Jesters, is expanding into features and two-reel westerns. There's much less publicity and reviews for the Twede-Dan's as if Steiner was letting the series run on it's own steam while he actively promoted new projects. The Twede-Dan series ended at the end of the year, although the finished shorts continued to be distributed into 1920. Instead of jumping to a new series of shorts, Perez embarked on something new – directing features. Although he would seem a natural to direct slapstick features in 1920 there wasn't any. Roscoe Arbuckle was the only comic who had jumped from shorts to features and these were polite, situation comedies with a few sight gags used as occasional seasoning. Instead Perez directed two society dramas that William Steiner was involved in producing for the independent market. THE WAY WOMEN LOVE ('20) and LUXURY ('21) both starred Rubye de Remer, a former Ziegfeld beauty who had recently entered films. It was during this period that he started using the name Marcel Perez. He may have thought it sounded a little fancier for features, and he kept it for the rest of his career.

As performer he was off the screen for almost a year and a half, but on April 9, 1921 the Moving Picture World announced:

TWEEDY DAN WITH REELCRAFT FILMS

Tweedy Dan, known on both sides of the Atlantic as a comedian is to be the star of a new series of two-reel comedies to be distributed by Reelcraft Pictures Corporation. The organization for the series has been completed and the first picture is now being made at the Mittenthal studio in Yonkers.

Tweedy Dan was one of the first actors to appear before the camera. He was with Pathe for five years then with Eclair, and later with Ambrosia in Italy, where he was the featured comedian in a series of one-reel comedies distributed throughout the world, and which proved to be very popular. He became director-general of that company and later came to the United States and was featured in a series of Jester Comedies for William Steiner. His efforts have recently been confined to directing, having produced a series of features under the name of Marcel Perez.

Reelcraft was a distribution company that specialized in comedy shorts. It was formed in 1920 when the Bull's Eye Film Co., the Emerald Motion Picture Co., and Bee Hive Film Exchange merged. The president was R.C. Cropper and the company released the films of popular comics such as Alice Howell, Billy West, Gale Henry, and Milburn Moranti. They also handled people completely forgotten today like Gordon & William Dooley, Frederic J. Ireland, Billy B. Van, and picked up stray shorts such as Stan Laurel's THE LUCKY DOG ('21) for distribution.

Tweedy Dan was soon shortened to Tweedy and the series was named Mirth Comedies. Perez joined Reelcraft during it's last days. The bigger names were gone and most of the product was being made by Schiller Productions. Morris and Julius Schiller produced Perez's Mirth Comedies plus Aladdin Comedies starring Bud Duncan, and Sun-Lite Comedies starring Billy Quirk (and a young Jobyna Ralston). Although the Sun-Lite's were shot in Florida, the Schiller's base was in Yonkers, NY, and the Mirth and Aladdin's were shot there at the old Mittenthal studio.

Nilde Baracchi appears to have returned to Europe and Babette Perez has been replaced as leading lady by Dorothy Earle, a cute young blonde. Only a couple of the Mirth comedies are known to exist. The Library of Congress has a copy of SWEET DADDY, which is one of the best surviving Perez films. Tweedy is a hen-pecked husband. His wife is a militant suffragette and has him chained by the neck to the kitchen wall doing dishes. When he tries to stand up for himself she shoves him out the window, and there are hilarious shots of him hanging by his neck out the window three stories up in the air. The wife finally hauls him back in and sends him on an errand to the grocery. On the way he passes billboards for a musical show and in a charming scene he imagines that the girl in the photo comes to life, so he flirts with her and gives her a kiss. Continuing on his way he comes across the real girl from the poster being accosted by a thug, and he helps to rescue her. Smitten, he goes to see her show, and afterward they go to a restaurant together. Tweedy is having a great time eating spaghetti with his sweetie when his wife comes in with two of her suffragette friends and sits at an adjoining table. Tweedy's in a panic but gets a plan. He sends Dorothy out and when she comes back she's dressed as a nurse and begins wrapping Tweedy in bandages. His alibi is that he's been in an accident. At first it works as his wife frantically sends for a doctor, but soon she catches on and everything hits the fan which results in a marvelous chase. Tweedy, whose lower half has been wrapped up like a mummy, literally hops through the entire chase, in and out of rooms, up and down stairs, etc. Although it's very hard to describe and really needs to be seen, it's quite a feat of acrobatics and is very clever and riotously funny. Finally Tweedy gets cornered by his wife and the doctor who grabs ends of the bandages to unwrap him. This spins him like a top, and at the fadeout he's been screwed completely into the ground.

In SWEET DADDY you can see how Perez continued to refine his comic persona. In the earlier Eagle and Jester comedies he's a low-class buffoon. Here he's still a buffoon but a sympathetic one. There's a touch of pathos and wistfulness in his mistreatment by his wife, and a lot of charm when he imagines that the girl on the poster has come to life. He's also spiffed up his image – now he's nattily dressed with his hair slicked down in a bowl cut and parted in the middle. As to other surviving Mirth Comedies, the NFA in London has a copy of PINCHED, and a few years ago the Nederlands Filmmuseum sent an unidentified Tweedy comedy, under the

Illustrations courtesy Kimberly Pivtak

Dutch title BRUID VAN POLYCARPE, to the Library of the Congress. The plot has Tweedy engaged to Angelica but actually fancies her maid Ninette, and the cast includes Dorothy Earle and Flo Bailey.

At least nine Mirth Comedies were made before Reelcraft ceased production in late fall of 1921. Looking through exhibitor magazines of the time there's progressively less and less items on the Reelcraft product, then after November, nothing. Finally an item in the 6/17/1922 Moving Picture World reports:

BANKRUPTCY INVOLVES REELCRAFT

New York – An involuntary petition in bankruptcy was filed here on Wednesday, June 7, against Reelcraft Picture Corporation, a producing and distributing company with offices at 220 West 42nd Street, on the complaint of three creditors. Nothing in the petition filed disclosed the identity of those connected with the corporation in an official or other capacity, but the complaint alleges the liabilities are $150,000 and the assets $50,000. Judge John C. Knox appointed Max Cedarbaum receiver for the concern with a bond of $2,500.

This was followed on 10/28/1922 with:

EXPORT - IMPORT BUYS REELCRAFT

Export & Import Film Company, Inc., this week announced that it had purchased from the receivers of the Reelcraft Pictures Corporation all rights, title and interest in negatives in the possession of the latter firm. These negatives embrace 160 in number, including one and two-reel subjects with Billy West, Texas Guinan, Alice Howell, Billy Franey, Matty Roubert, George Clarke, and Milburn Moranti comedies.

With Reelcraft out of commission, Perez turns up in the spring of 1922 working for producer F. M. Sanford, to direct a series of eight western features starring Pete Morrison, and a new group of twelve Tweedy comedies. Unfortunately neither series was completed. Director Robert Florey, who had arrived in Hollywood in the 1920's and sent articles about it back to European film journals, said in his 1948 memoir, Hollywood d'hier et d'ajjourd'hui, that Perez had an accident during the making one of the comedies. While shooting a scene he fell on an upturned rake. The teeth of the rake sank into his leg and penetrated the bone, resulting in the leg having to be amputated. No news items have yet to surface (Perez and the company may have kept it quiet), but the accident seems to have occurred at the very end of 1922 or the beginning of 1923. The last item I've found about Perez, before a long break in any information, is in the 11/11/1922 Moving Picture World which says that he had just finished a new Pete Morrison western. He had completed a total of three Morrison westerns and six Tweedy comedies for Sanford. Some of these titles were in distribution in 1923 while he was recovering.
Robert Florey said that the accident impaired his health for the rest of his life. How he dealt with the blow mentally is anybody's guess, but the evidence suggests that he was eager to get back to work. After an absence of two years he was back in harness again in the fall of 1925 directing two-reelers for producer Joe Rock.

Rock, born Joseph Simberg, started his career as a member of Vitagraph's "Big V" Riot Squad. The squad also included Earle Montgomery, Joe Basil, and Pietro Aramando, and it's function was to make screen life difficult for Larry Semon, Jimmy Aubrey, and Hughie Mack. Around 1918 he was teamed with Earl Montgomery in a popular series of stunt comedies. After they separated Joe produced his own starring shorts for the independent market, and a couple of years later more or less retired as performer to produce series with other comics like Stan Laurel and Jimmy Aubrey. By mid-1925 Rock was concentrating on two series' Standard Comedies, also known as Fat Men Comedies, starring heavyweights "Fatty" Alexander, "Fat" Karr, & "Kewpie" Ross, and Blue Ribbon Comedies with Alice Ardell who was billed as "Joe Rock's latest find" and "a young Parisian girl who it is prophesied will be one of the screen sensations of the year."

Perez began directing the Ardell series with its third comedy HOLD TIGHT ('25). A gimmick for the series was having a different male comedian play opposite Ardell in each short. So Chester Conklin, Lee Moran, Slim Summerville, Neely Edwards, and Joe Rock himself took turns appearing and supplying most of the laughs, as Ardell was pretty, athletic, and had a pleasing personality – but wasn't funny. The shorts are funny due to the talents of people like Perez behind the camera, and her leading men and supporting comics on screen. Historian Sam Gill feels that Perez may have been brought in to direct the bulk of these comedies because Ardell only spoke French and Perez was fluent in it. Publicity items usually noted that "Tweedy, who is handling the megaphone, was once a comedian" or "This production was directed by Marcel Perez, himself a well known comedian and better known to film fans as "Tweedy." Surviving entries such as HOLD TIGHT ('25) and A PEACEFUL RIOT ('25) show a strong directorial hand. The shorts clip along at a nice pace, and there are many large physical comedy set pieces which are directed with snap and precision.

Illustration courtesy Sam Gill

Perez directed Neely Edwards in ***"Mummy Love"***

It's definite that Perez directed five of the Ardell's and one of the Fat Men Comedies, THE VULGAR YACHTSMAN ('26), but directorial credits are hard to establish on many of the Rock shorts so it's probable that he worked on more. It's also been reported that he directed some of Rock's 1925 Jimmy Aubrey shorts. Perez appears to have stayed with Rock until late 1926, and then entered the last phase of his career. A Moving Picture World article from 2/5/1927 lists him in the stable of comedy writers at work on Reginald Denny features and other comedies at Universal.

Despite the frustrating lack of an obituary it appears that Marcel Perez died at the very end of 1927, or the beginning of 1928. His last known credit was as director on a Universal Charles Puffy one-reeler, HIS IN LAWS, which was released on 3/12/1928, but had been copyrighted earlier on 10/19/1927. For a description of his last days we have to go back to Robert Florey's memoir. Florey said that he had gone to a hospital to visit Renee Adoree, who was undergoing some kind of abdominal surgery. At the hospital he found out that Perez was there, and had been there for six weeks. He was near death, and the doctors had kept the seriousness of his condition from him. Florey went to see him and Perez asked about news from Paris. They talked at length about Charles Prince, Max Linder, Andre Deed, and other friends from Pathe. Florey said that

Perez died ten days later, alone and ignored.

Alone and ignored is also a good description of how he's been treated by posterity. Much of this is due to his constantly changing his name, and the name of his screen persona, as he made his gypsy-like way through the history of early screen comedy. Many film histories refer to Marcel Fabre and his character of "Robinet," but few realize that he continued in America as Marcel Perez, Fernandez Perez, or Marcel F. Perez, and that the characters of "Bungle," "Tweedledum," "Tweede Dan," and "Tweedy" were all the same comic. While some of these name changes may have been due to legal ownership rights as he moved from company to company, much of this seems to have been a legacy from his early European days.

But the main reason for his neglect is the unavailability of his films. A few of the comedies that he directed for Joe Rock get around, but none of his starring American comedies are in circulation to silent comedy fans. Without access to a major archive that work is impossible to see. Although his output here was prolific, it was done for very small independent companies with dismal survival rates. Hopefully more of the films will turn up and make their way into the hands of comedy fans, so they can experience and enjoy his work and unique talents.

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MARCEL PEREZ FILMOGRAPHY

This is really just a first stab at charting Perez's prolific output. Much more info needs to be found, especially on his early European films and the period of 1917 in America. If anyone has any additional titles or information on Marcel Perez please contact me at:
ReelComedy1@aol.com or write me in care of Slapstick!

Filmography Key:
PD= Producer, Dist.=Distributor, D=Director, C=Cast, A=Author.
Films marked with an asterisk are known to exist.
CI=Cinetca Italiana, Milan
CQ=La Cinematheque Quebecoise, Canada
DF=Det Danske Filmmuseum, Denmark
FCA=Fundacion Cinematea Argentina, Buenos Aires
LOC=Library of Congress, Washington, DC
MC=Museo de Cinema, Turin
MoMA=The Museum of Modern Art, New York
NFA=National Film Archive, London
NFTS=National Film, Television & Sound Archive, Ottawa
NLF=Nederlands Filmmuseum, Amsterdam

PART ONE: EUROPEAN FILMS

The Short-Sighted Cyclist* (1907) PD: Eclipse. (NFA, MoMA)

AS ROBINET FOR AMBROSIO:

Under the name of Marcel Fabre Perez starred as Robinet in this five year series for Societa Anomina Ambrosio of Turin, and directed most of the films as well. The entries in which Nilde Baracchi co-starred as Robinette are marked with an NB.

1910:
Il Capodanno Di Robinet
Il Duello Di Robinet
Fricot Impiegato Municipale
Gigetta Si Vendica Di Robinet
La Prima Bicicletta Di Robinet
Il Prurito Di Robinet
Robinet Ama La Figlia Del Generale
Robinet Appassionato Pei Dirigibile
Robinet Costretto A Fare Il Ladro
Robinet Ha Il Sonno Duro
Robinet Ha La Mania Del Salvadanio
Robinet Ha Perso Il Treno
Robinet Ha Un Tic Per Il Ballo
Robinet Questurino
Robinet Studia Una Parte Tragica
Robinet Vuol Fare Il Jockey* - (NLF)
Storia Di Un Paio Di Stivali

1911:
L'Abito Bianco Di Robinet* - (NLF)
L'Astuzia Di Robinet
L'Auto Di Robinet* - (NLF, MC)
Gli Auto-Scat Di Robinet
Un' Avventura Di Robinet
La Cintura D'Oro
La Collana Rubata
La Furberie Di Robinet
Gastone E Robinet Vogliono Prender Moglie
Il Pesce D'Aprile Di Robinet
Reclame Del Sarto
Robinet Ammiratore Di Napoleone
Robinet Arriva In Ritardo
Robinet Aviatore* - (CI)
Robinet Detective
Robinet E Il Monocolo Della Verita - NB
Robinet E L'Avventuriera
Robinet E Troppo Timido
Robinet Ed I Salvatori - NB
Robinet Ha Paura Dei Microbi
Robinet Ha Rubato Centro Lire* - (NLF)
Robinet In Bolletta
Robinet In Societa
Robinet Innamorato Di Una Chanteuse* - (NLF, MC)
Robinet Si Dedica Agli Sports Invernali* - (NFA)
Robinet Sposa Un'americana - NB
Robinet Tra Due Fuochi* - NB (NFA)
Robinet Vuol Diventare Eroe
Robinet, Sua Moglie E Il Cugino
Uno Scherzo Di Robinet - NB
La Scimmia Di Robinet
Il Sogno Di Robinet* - (DF)
Gil Stivali Di Robinet - NB

1912:
Un Complotto Contro Robinet
Una Dichiarazione Impossibile Di Robinet* - NB (NLF)
L'Evasione Di Robinet - NB
Nei Lacci Del Destino
Un Nuovo Furto Di Robinet
L'Onomastico Di Robinet - NB
Le Rendite Di Robinet - NB
Robinet Alpino
Robinet Caricaturista - NB
Robinet Commesso Viaggiatore
Robinet Contro Un Rubinetto
Robinet Diventa Un Ercole
Robinet Fa Il Giro D'Italia In Bicicletta

Robinet Fa La Cura Dei Bagni - NB
Robinet Fa Un Allievo
Robinet Falso Cow-Boy - NB
Robinet Guida Per Amore - NB
Robinet In Un Educandato* - NB (NFA)
Robinet In Vacanza* - NB (NLF, NFA)
Robinet Ladro Inafferrabile - NB
Robinet Maestro D'Equitazione
Robinet Nichilista* - NB (CI)
Robinet Operatore
Robinet Padre E Figlio* - (NLF)
Robinet Ricattatore - NB
Robinet Ricco Per Dieci Minuti
Robinet Scioperante
Robinet Si Allena Per Il Giro D'Italia
Robinet Si Assicura Alla Vita - NB
Robinet Sogna Il Mare - NB
Robinet Troppo Amato Da Sua Moglie
La Signora Robinet* - (NLF)
La Strenna Di Robinet
Uno Zoppo Che Fa Strada

1913:

Una Buona Giornata Di Robinet
Come Robinet Sposo Robinette - NB
Il Duello Di Fricot - NB
I Fratelli Robinet - NB
Fricot Cantastorie - NB
L'Idolo Di Robinet
Madamigella Robinet - NB
La Madre Di Robinet - NB
Robinet Ama La Fiorala - NB
Robinet Anarchico
Robinet Attaccato Alla Sella
Robinet Boxeur*
Robinet Cocchiere* - (CI)
Robinet Corteggiatore Tenace
Robinet E Butalin Si Battono
Robinet E Lo Steeple-Chase - NB
Robinet Femminista - NB
Robinet Guardia Ciclista* - NB (MoMA)
Robinet Malato Di Sonno
Robinet Poliziotto
Robinet Reporter
Robinet Sbaglia Piano - NB
Robinet Si Da Alla Malavita
Robinet Sportman
Robinet Sposa A Vapore - NB
Robinet Studia Matematica - NB
Robinet Tenore
Robinet Vuol Lavorare
Robinet Vuol Piantare Un Chiodo
Robinet Vuol Sposare Una Dote
Robinet, Robinette - NB
Una Scommessa Di Butalin E Di Robinet - NB
La Suocera Di Robinet - NB

1914:

Amor Pedestre* - (MoMA, DF, CQ, FCA)
L'Amore Diede La Forza A Robinet - NB
Le Aventure Straordinarissime Di Saturnino Faradola* - NB
Farandola - NB
Il Bastone Di Robinet
Il Cavallo Fedele - NB
Come Robinet Divento Comico - NB
Delenda Carthago!
La Donna Economa - NB
Duetto In Quattro - NB
L'Energia Di Fricot - NB
Fricot E Le Uova
Il Piccolo Fricot
Un Qui Pro Quo Di Sheriff-Holfufus
Robinet Alla Caccia Della Volpe - NB
Robinet Ama Disinteressatamente - NB
Robinet Cerca L'Ideale - NB
Robinet Chauffeur Miope* - (MC)
Robinet E Geloso - NB
Robinet Fotografo
Robinet Ha Del Crattere - NB
Robinet Ha Il Tipo Americano - NB
Robinet Ha Il Torcicollo
Robinet Non Vuol Saperne - NB
Robinet Perde E Guadagna - NB
Robinet Pescatore - NB
La Trovata Di Robinet - NB
Un Viaggio Laborioso - NB

1915:

Les Adventures De Saturino Faradole*
La Cambiale Di Robinet
La Colpa Del Morto - NB
Concorrenza Spietata
Jack Forbes Contro Robinet - NB
Il Paletot A Martingala Di Robinet
Quando Robinet Ama - NB
Robinet Angelo Custode - NB
Robinet Detective Amateur - NB
Robinet E Il Conto Del Pranzo
Robinet Muore Per Amore - NB
Robinet Torna A Robinette - NB
Robinette Vuol Farla A Robinet - NB
Il Yacht Misterioso - NB

PART TWO: AMERICAN FILMS

AS DIRECTOR FOR JOKER:

A Day at Midland Beach (10/30/1915) Joker. Dist: Universal. 1 rl. Dirs: Allen Curtis & Marcel Perez. C: Marcel Perez

AS BUNGLES FOR VIM:

Bungles Rainy Day (2/10/1916) Vim. PD:Louis Burstein. D: Fernandea Perez. C: Perez, Elsie McLeod, Oliver Hardy. 1rl.

Bungles Enforces the Law (2/24/1916) Vim. PD: Louis Burstein. 1 rl. D: Fernandea Perez. C: Perez, Elsie McLeod, Oliver Hardy, Bobby Burns.

Bungles Elopement (3/9/1916) Vim. PD: Louis Burstein. D: Fernandea Perez. C: Perez, Elsie McLeod, Oliver Hardy. 1 rl.

Bungles Lands A Job (3/23/1916) Vim. PD: Louis Burstein. D: Fernandea Perez. C: Perez, Elsie McLeod, Oliver Hardy. 1 rl.

AS TWEEDLEDUM FOR EAGLE FILMS:

Torpedoed By Cupid (6/19/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD:William J. Dunn. D: Perez. C: Perez, Babette Perez, Rex Adams, Louise Carver, Tom Murray, Billy Slade. 1 rl. (a.k.a. Tweedledum Torpedoed by Cupid).

A Busy Night* (6/26/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD:William J. Dunn. D: Perez. 2 rls. (a.k.a. Tweedledum's Busy Night). (LOC).

A Scrambled Honeymoon (7/3/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD: William J. Dunn. D: Perez. 2 rls. (a.k.a. Tweedledum's Scrambled Honeymoon).

Some Hero* (10/23/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD: William J. Dunn. D: Perez. C: Perez, Babette Perez, Jerry Jellman, Jim McGowan, Charles Sharp, Billy Slade. 1 rl. (a.k.a. He's Some Hero). (MoMA).

A Lucky Tramp (11/6/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD: William J. Dunn. D: Perez. C: Perez, Babette Perez, Melvin Andrews, Tom Murray. 1 rl.

Lend Me Your Wife* (11/13/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD: William J. Dunn. D: Perez. C: Perez, Babette Perez, Louise Carver, Tom Murray. 2 rls. (MoMA).

A Bath Tub Elopement (11/20/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD: William J. Dunn. D: Perez. C: Perez, J.Malvin Ambrose, Tom Murray. 1 rl.

A Short Sighted Crime (11/27/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD: William J. Dunn. D: Perez. 2 rls.

Somewhere In Mexico (12/4/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD: William J. Dunn. D: Perez. 1 rl.

The Burlesque Show (12/11/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD: Wm J. Dunn. D: Perez. (listed in film journals as one & two reels).

The Near-Sighted Auto-Pedist (12/1916) Eagle Films. Dist: Unity Film Sales. PD: William J. Dunn. D: Perez.

AS TWEEDE-DAN FOR JESTER COMEDIES:

The Recruit (2/15/1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. C: Perez, Wilbert Shields. 2 rls.

His Golden Romance (3/15/1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. D: Courtlandt Van Dusen. 2 rls.

All 'Fur' Her (4/15/1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. 2 rls.

The Wrong Flat (5/15/1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. C: Perez, Nilde Babette. 2 rls. (a.k.a. In and Out).

This Is the Life (5/1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. 2 rls. (a.k.a. It's a Great Life).

Oh! What a Day* (8/1/1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. D: William Seiter. C: Perez, Babette Perez. 2 rls. (MoMA).

The Fly Ball (9/1/1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. D: William Seiter. 2 rls.

Ain't It So (10/1/1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. D: William Seiter. 2 rls.

Some Baby (11/1/1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. D: William Seiter. 2 rls.

Camouflage (11/15/1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. D: Wm Seiter. 2 rls.

He Wins (1918) Jester. PD: William Steiner. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

In the Wild West* (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. C: Perez, Babette Perez, Nilde Babette. 2 rls. (LOC).

Peace and Riot (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. 2 rls.

The Tenderfoot (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. 2 rls.

A Mexican Mix-Up (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. 2 rls.

The Wisest Fool (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. 2 rls.

Gee Whiz (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. D: Perez. 2 rls.

Almost Married (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. D: Perez. 2 rls.

Illustration courtesy Sam Gill

Tweede-Dan and friends in ***"The Frame Up"***

Business Without Pleasure (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. D: Perez. 2 rls.

Can You Beat It? (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. D: Perez. 2 rls.

The Frame Up (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. D: Perez. 2 rls. (a.k.a. The Framed Up).

In the Swim (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. D: Perez. 2 rls.

Chicken In Turkey (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. 2 rls.

She-Me (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. D: Perez. 2 rls.

You're Next (1919) Jester. PD: William Steiner. Dist: Territorial Sales Corp. D: Perez. 2 rls.

AS TWEEDY FOR REELCRAFT:

Here He Is (5/16/1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

Sweet Daddy* (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. PH: H. Obrock. C: Perez, Dorothy Earle. 2 rls. (LOC, NLF).

Chick, Chick (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez, Dorothy Earle. 2 rls.

Illustration courtesy Sam Gill

Tweede-Dan at left in drag and possibly a ***"Chicken in Turkey"***

Illustration courtesy Sam Gill

Vacation (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

Speed (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

Wild (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

Unidentified Boxing Comedy (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls. (Listed as a release in the 8/13/1921 issue of Moving Picture World, but without a specific title).

Moving (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

Week End (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Shiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez. 2 rls.

Pinched* (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez, Dorothy Earle. 2 rls. (NFA).

AS TWEEDY FOR SANFORD PRODUCTIONS:

Fire – Fire (9/1/1922) Tweedy Comedies. PD: Sanford Prods. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

Take A Tip (10/1/1922) Tweedy Comedies. PD: Sanford Prods. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

Don't Monkey (11/1/1922) Tweedy Comedies. PD: Sanford Prods. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

Dog Gone It (12/1/1922) Tweedy Comedies. PD: Sanford Prods. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

Three O'Clock In The Morning (1/1/1923) Tweedy Comedies. PD: Sanford Prods. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

Friday, 13th (2/1/1923) Tweedy Comedies. PD: Sanford Prods. D: Marcel Perez. 2 rls.

FEATURES AS DIRECTOR:

The Way Women Love (1920) PD: Lyric Films/ William Steiner Prod. Dist: Arrow Film Corp. D: Marcel Perez. PH: William Cooper. A: Herman Landon. C: Rubye DeRemer, Edward Elkas, Walter D. Greene, Thomas Magraine, Walter Miller, Rose Mintz, Henry W. Pemberton. 5 rls.

Luxury (1921) PD: Lyric Films/ William Steiner Prod. Dist: Arrow Film Corp. D: Marcel Perez. C: Rubye De Remer, Fredrick Kalgren, Thomas Magraine, Rose Mintz, Henry W. Pemberton. 6 rls.

Unconquered Women (1922) PD: Pasha Film Corp. D: Marcel Perez. PH: William Cooper. C: Rubye De Remer, Fred C. Jones, Frankie Mann, Walter Miller, Nick Thompson. 5 rls.

The Better Man Wins* (1922) PD: Sanford Prods. D: Marcel Perez & Frank S. Mattison. C: Pete Morrison, Dorothy Woods, Gene Crosby, E.L. Van Sickle, Jack Walters, Tom Bay. 6 rls.

Duty First (1922) PD: Sanford Prods. D: Marcel Perez. C: Pete Morrison. 5 rls.

West Vs. East (1922) PD: Sanford Prods. Dist: Arrow Film Corp. D: Marcel Perez. C: Pete Morrison, Dorothy Woods, Gene Crosby, Renee Danti, Bessie De Litch, Lorenz Gillette, Robert Gray. 5 rls.

Pioneers of the West (1925) PD: William Mix Prods. D: Marcel Perez. C: Dick Carter, Gene Crosby, Dorothy Earle, Olin Francis, Bud Osborn. 5 rls. (This feature has an accepted release date of 6/1/1927, but I found a review in the Moving Picture World of 9/19/1925. The 1927 date may be a reissue).

AS DIRECTOR FOR JOE ROCK PRODUCTIONS:

Hold Tight* (11/15/1925) Blue Ribbon Comedy. PD: Joe Rock/ Standard Cinema Prods. Dist: FBO. D: Marcel Perez. C: Joe Rock, Alice Ardell. 2 rls. (NFTS).

A Peaceful Riot* (12/15/1925) Blue Ribbon Comedy. PD: Joe Rock/ Standard Cinema Prods. Dist: FBO. D: Marcel Perez. C: Alice Ardell, Slim Summerville, Max Asher, Leon Kent, Ethan Laidlaw, Harry Martel. 2 rls.

Mummy Love (1/10/1926) Blue Ribbon. PD: Joe Rock/ Standard Cinema Prods. Dist: FBO. D: Marcel Perez. C: Alice Ardell, Neely Edwards. 2 rls.

The Hurricane (4/4/1926) Blue Ribbon Comedy. PD: Joe Rock/ Standard Cinema Prods. Dist: FBO. D: Marcel Perez. C: Alice Ardell. 2 rls.

She's A Prince* (5/2/1926) Blue Ribbon Comedy. PD: Joe Rock/ Standard Cinema Prods. D: Marcel Perez. C: Alice Ardell, Billy Franey, Billy Engle, Dorothy Vernon. 2 rls.

The Vulgar Yachtsman* (11/15/1926) Standard Comedies. PD: Joe Rock/ Standard Cinema Prods. D: Marcel Perez. C: Frank "Fatty" Alexander, Hillard "Fat" Karr, Bill "Kewpie" Ross, Gale Henry. 2 rls. (NLF).

AS DIRECTOR & WRITER FOR UNIVERSAL:

Out All Night (9/4/1927) PD: Universal. D: William Seiter. A: Gladys Lehman. Adapt: Harvey Thew & Marcel Perez. Titl: Tom Reed. C: Reginald Denny, Marian Nixon, Wheeler Oakman, Dororthy Earle, Dan Mason, Alfred Allen, Robert Seiter, Ben Hendricks Jr., Billy Franey, Harry Tracy, Lionel Braham. 6 rls.

His In-Laws (3/12/1928) PD: Universal. D: Marcel Perez. A: Octavus Roy Cohen. C: Charles Puffy, Octavus Roy Cohen. @ 10/19/1927. 2 rls.

FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

Two of a Kind (1916). Jockey Comedy. Dist: Unicorn. C: Perez, Babette Perez, Rex Adams, Tom Murray.

Tweedledee and Her Daughter* (ca1916) The NFA has this listed in their holdings. It could be a different title for one of the already known Eagle Films, or something entirely different.

Sources for article and filmography:

Moving Picture World 1911 – 1927.
Motion Picture News Booking Guide 1922 – 1927.
AFI Catalog 1921 – 1930.
cnmovies.com
The Universal Silents by Richard E. Braff.
Bulls Eye/Reelcraft Filmography compiled by Robert Farr & Joe Moore.
Laurel Or Hardy by Rob Stone.

TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE

By Oma Moody Lawrence

As originally appeared in The Chicago Post, Nov. 25, 1916

The world is always looking for comedy. If you believe that it is the serious photoplay that will finally prevail and bring in the ducats for the producer and the exhibitor, you may be right, but at present you are in the minority class. The highest salary paid to any motion picture player is paid to a comedian, Charlie Chaplin. More than one producer is pinning his faith and his fortune to some cherished comedian at this moment. And comedies, being the "chasers" that cleared the house to provide room for the next shows audience, are now often the feature attraction. And the really great "funmaker" is yet to be found. Is he already on the screen, but not yet well enough known because his work is new? Some of the people who ought to know think that "Tweedledum" is destined to become the house-hold word in the home of the comedy lovers of the United States.

Now who is "Tweedledum?" Manuel Fernandez Perez was born in Madrid thirty-two years ago. He is "Tweedledum." He has been on the screen in Europe for eighteen years, with Pathe, with Ambrosio of Turin, with Eclair of Paris and with Eclipse. Before that he was in vaudeville; he has literally grown up in comedy, and he is getting funnier every minute. Most of his early life was spent in Paris. When you ask him about Spain he smiles a little and says: "But you see, tho I was born in Spain and my parents were Spanish, I really do not know Spain very well. Most of my life I have lived in France and in the northern part of Italy. I like Spain, but I have been very busy and I have not had much time to spend there. I believe there is only one person who has been in motion pictures longer than I have and I have had many things to do.

"I like the pictures better than the stage, because I like change. For the stage, one rehearses two or three months and then plays the same thing over and over for a year or so. In pictures I never rehearse the actual comedy scene you want to be funny, if it is, it is forced. I decide what I am going to do and explain it to my company. The only definite arrangements that I make is the plan of our entrances and exits, and our positions on the stage. We don't want to be walking into each other, you know."

There have been fourteen comedies made by Tweedledum since he came to the United States a year and a half ago. Only six have been released as yet, but they are being published weekly. When Signor Perez came to America he spoke no English and was obliged to direct his company thru an interpreter. He speaks French and Italian as well as his native tongue, and decided that another language more, or less would not be a liability. He set to work to study English, and American tastes at the same time. He realized that some of the comedy that appeals to the Europeans will not be understood here. He made a point of visiting all the comedies he could manage and studied the type that appealed to the average audience. He has done wonders with his study of English; he seems to have no difficulty in finding words to express himself. You can judge for yourself whether he has succeeded as well in his research among American audiences.

"I am using an autoped in my latest sketch, and I have broken two already. I tried to fix up a little buffer on the front of the machine, but I could not make one strong enough. That is the big difficulty, one must not have a machine made especially strong, and so often they break when they should not. I used one pie once" (in response to a question), "but never again. That time I had to have six retakes. Ah, that is what I hate, the retakes! It is so hard to be funny again. In Italy, with Ambrosio, I had a company that had been with me for six years. They understood me: we never had retakes. But here some-times it is awful. I have a good company, but it is so hard for them to understand me. They are better now than at first. When I had to use an interpreter I used to feel that he did not translate the idea correctly. Then we would have something entirely different from what I wanted. He did his best, but he did not get my idea.

"When I first went into the pictures people thought that it was a place for the riff-raff of the stage, we had lots of broken-down artists and many who had made a failure on the stage. But now it is the same in Europe as it is here. The great stars are anxious to go onto the screen. The extras may sometimes be outcasts from the stage but extras are not actors, anyway. They are trials to everyone as a rule."

Tweedledum has a co-worker, Tweedledee, who is also his wife, and the combination is a happy one, for what one can't think of, the other does. And Tweedledum and Tweedledee are far from having the difference that troubled the first famous possessors of their name.

My thanks to Steve Massa for turning up the above rare interview with Marcel "Tweedledum" Perez –

Steve R, Editor

We decided to put the letters aside this issue and tell you a little about

What's New in SlapStick!

Our good friend Rob Farr tells us that Slapstick! fans will be in Nirvana in July of 2003 (*next* year, folks) when the First Annual Slapsticon debuts at the Spectrum Theatre in Arlington, Virginia (located just outside Washington DC and easily accessible by air and rail). The Slapsticon will be a three-day celebration of the golden age of physical comedy with occasional forays into classic animation and musical comedies. The 16mm program will heavily favor rarely screened comics like Charley Chase and Billy Franey, but fans of Buster Keaton and Laurel & Hardy will see their favorites too. This intrepid reporter will have film titles and exact dates are as they are solidified, BUT we hear the weekend may include a field trip into Washington for screenings at....(Mmmmpppphhh!!!). Oh well, lost another intrepid reporter. Watch this space next issue folks!

Rob also mentions "The Film Comedy Reader," edited by Gregg Rickman (Limelight Editions, 2001) and just now in bookstores. It is a collection of essays that Slapstick readers will enjoy, including a definitive profile of gagman, writer and director Al Boasberg, a discussion of Harold Lloyd's one-reelers, an appreciative biography of Edgar Kennedy, a discussion of The Three Stooges' style and how it conforms to classic Commedia dell'Arte, reprints of articles by Frank Capra and Buster Keaton, a comparison of the classic slapstick comics with today's crop by Rick Levinson and many more pieces of interest to this group.

ZEPPO MARX SOLO CREDIT DISCOVERED BY ROBERT MOULTON

Recently, while perusing www.newspaperarchive.com Marx historian Robert Moulton discovered a 1925 notice in an Ohio newspaper for a Paramount film called "A Kiss in the Dark." Deep in the cast listing is a credit for "...Herbert Marx, one of the Marx brothers in the 'I'll Say She Is' company." Zep is not listed in the cast in the 1921-1930 AFI Catalogue, so his presence was a mystery.

Washington-based researcher Rob Farr went to the Library of Congress to look for some confirmation, but Zeppo was not mentioned in reviews by The New York Times, Variety, Moving Picture World, Motion Picture News and Harrison's Reports. He finally found corroboration in Paramount's copyright deposit...a pressbook for AKITD. It is essentially a longer blurb than the one Moulton found in his research. The AFI missed it because Zeppo was not in the official cast list, but one of a number of Broadway guest stars that included Kitty Kelley of "Miss Jane McKane" and Eden Brand of "The Firebrand." The piece doesn't say which role Zeppo was cast in, but the character played by Lillian Rich is described as having "eyes for every personable chap who crosses her path." Zeppo?

"A Kiss in the Dark" was released on April 6, 1925 (three months after Harpo's "Too Many Kisses") and stars Adolphe Menjou, Aileen Pringle, Lillian Rich, Kenneth MacKenna and Ann Pennington. It was shot on Paramount's Astoria studios and directed by Frank Tuttle.

Moulton's discovery suggests that Zeppo was exploring the possibility of an independent career away from the act as early as 1925. Or he might simply have been inspired by Harpo to pick up some easy money during the day. Though the film appears to among the lost, "A Kiss in the Dark" can now take it's place in the Marx Brothers' filmography.

Our friend and author Brent Walker, who penned the Lige Conley biography and filmography in Slapstick #5, has written an article on the Robert Youngson compilation films which appears in the new issue (#3) of "The Moving Image," the Journal for the Association of Moving Image Archivists. And look for Brent's return in Slapstick! #7 with his stories of Ted Edwards and another "mystery" Keystone player (whose identity he's keeping a secret until publication) in January 2003.

Brent continues to document the productions and personnel of Mack Sennett for the book he is compiling and is always on the lookout for new research material on Sennett...just about anything from any period. Stills or production material on the Keystone-Mutual area especially. If any of the readers can be of help, I encourage you to get in touch with Slapstick! and your communications will be forwarded to Brent.

And speaking of The King of Comedy, author Simon Louvish is also hard at work on his book on Sennett. You may recognize Simon's name as the author of the recent W.C. Fields biography, Man On the Flying Trapeze.

Essanay scholar David Kiehn and film historian Sam Gill are the authors of a real nice Snakeville Filmography that came out a little while back, with great cast and credit info and rare illustrations. Sam is the current keeper of the Snakeville Filmography copies, if there are any left right now. If you're interested in the Snakeville Filmography, drop us a letter here at Slapstick! and I'll tell you more.

In addition to his Snakeville Filmography, David Kiehn has also authored a brand new book, BRONCHO BILLY AND THE ESSANAY FILM COMPANY, which finally brings to life the pioneering filmmakers who defined the western movie, and took comedy to new heights. Meet Gilbert M. Anderson, Ben Turpin, Charlie Chaplin and the two hundred men and women of the western Essanay division. Their story is told in more than 200 photos and 448 pages, including a filmography. $32.50. It's due out in October through Farwell Books, PO Box 14792 Berkeley, CA 94712 510 548-5295 farwellbks@earthlink.net

Another good friend, Steve Massa (Slapstick! author of Marcel "Tweedy" Perez and Alice Howell) is hard at work on researching the lives and careers of Alice Howell and Gale Henry for that great periodical, Griffithiana.

Ed Lee (the last of the Kentucky Buckshot's) advises us that his Laurel and Hardy Age-ography is still available and any and every fans collection is incomplete without this reference. For more information, see our last issue or drop Slapstick! a line.

If you have access to the internet, be sure to check out author David Smith's website: http://www.hoosiersinhollywood.com for biographies of people like Louise Fazenda, Charlie Murray and Victor Potel (and more). It's a preview of his forthcoming book tentatively entitle, "Hoosiers in Hollywood."

In the video area, VIDEOBRARY, is one of the best. Paul Lisy's little company has been churning out some great titles and collections over the years. He's been very busy of late, concentrating much time and devotion to the PBS series SLAPHAPPY which many of our readers may have caught on TV. And to those not fortunate enough to have seen the show(s), it looks like Paul may independently sell episode copies (13 shows right now – there may be a mass marketed boxed set, but may sell individual shows - or combos of...), but we'll keep you posted.

Videobrary will soon also offer some COMEDY SHORTS RARITIES collections. Paul tells us, "I haven't had time to do much else on Videobrary, but I have some collections put together with some previously unreleased titles mixed in. I'll also have a Monty Banks and some others done soon." Stay tuned.

Jack Hardy's Grapevine Video is another old favorite for videos. In addition to many different titles, he recently announced some new releases including OPEN ALL NIGHT (1924) Directed by Paul Bern. Cast: Viola Dana, Jetta Goudal, Adolphe Menjou, Raymond Griffith, Maurice B. Flynn, Gale Henry, Jack Giddings & Charles Puffy; THE EARLY BIRD (1925) Directed by Charles Hines. Cast: Johnny Hines, Sigrid Holmquist, Wyndham Standing, Edmund Breese, Maude Turner Gordon, Bradley Barker, Flora Finch & Jack De Lacrey. Jack also added Volume #9 to his series, COMEDY CLASSICS - THE TALKIES - 5 early talkie short subjects. Grapevine's web site has been updated with new releases in VHS and provides more info on all titles. Get on their mailing list for frequent sales and specials.

From a reliable source we here that all of the LSVideo products are officially off the market at the present time. Due to a series of unfortunate circumstances affecting the owners of the company, it has been impossible to service orders. It is possible that some form of LSVideo may re-emerge in a slightly different form later this year or that they may license some of their more popular tapes to another vendor. These problems are especially unfortunate at this time because they have been working on several interesting Lon Chaney projects and have heavily invested in some new digital transfer equipment. For any of you that have sent orders in the mail recently, your checks are being returned un-cashed. The web site has been disabled since mid-April. The soonest they hope to be back up again would be probably November if at all.

That's about all the news fit to print for this issue. See you in January!

"Lucille Carlisle? – She was a nothing!"

A curator at the Cinèmathéque Française in an interview, September 1992

"...one of the loveliest and most talented girls who has ever appeared on the screen – Lucille Carlisle. Why in the world doesn't some star-hunting manager grab her?"

The LA Times, 15 April, 1919 [2]

Left: This is probably the photo that helped Lucille enter the movies (c. 1916).

LUCILLE CARLISLE – A LEADING LADY

By Claudia Sassen

Lucille Carlisle was born Ida Lucille White in Galesberg, Illinois. Lucille's father, Frank, came from a family in Illinois who owned a theatre in Detroit. They were well off as it seems. Frank was handsome and charming, but unstable. Lucille's mother, Della Pope, was born on a farm in Quebec. Her father went off to the gold fields in Nevada to find his fortune. One day, his family received word from him that he had become ill. Della was sent to nurse him to health. She left Boston where she was attending a school for secretaries and travelled to Nevada by way of Panama. There was no canal then so she crossed Panama by train. It was a hot and dangerous journey, especially for a young girl, and many people came down with malaria. She found her father and took care of him. Della became a teacher and married someone of whom there is no record. They had a son, but soon husband and son died of fever. It remains unknown where and when Della finally met Frank White, Lucille's father. They married and had four children: May Della (b. May 1892), Edna Ellen, who later used the name Helen Carlisle (b. November 1893), Ida Lucille (b. August 1895), and Melba Nevada (b. June 1898). Frank must have tried to be a good husband, but he worked as a horseshoer at racetracks and eventually left the family between 1907 and 1911. Alcohol was a problem and has been for some of his descendants. The last anyone heard from him was that he was seen in Louisville, Kentucky. The year their youngest child was born, Frank gave Della a large "temperance" bible. He probably attempted to give up drinking, failed and left.

Della was a rock. She held everything together for her daughters and took them from Detroit to Spokane, Washington, to live near her sister Florence. That was in 1911. Della purchased a boarding house which she also ran. The four girls worked in the boarding house and where ever else they could get jobs to help with finances.

Already at an early age, Lucille's beauty became apparent. She had

Frank White, Lucille's father.

Lucille (center), her sister Melba (right) and a friend (c. 1907).

Della Pope, Lucille's mother, at 16.

evidently inherited the good looks and the charm of her father. Early photos show a lively and bright girl of a warm personality with lovely dark eyes and a captivating smile. As far as friends, Lucille always was popular with men. She might have been a sort of tomboy since she and her mother in later years never missed a baseball game on the radio.

Sometime in the 1910's, Lucille married and assumed her husband's name *Zintheo* or *Zinther* whose identity cannot be determined, though. Since the name *Zintheo* has not been common in the United States, two approaches seem likely, but remain unconfirmed: The first is that Lucille married the brother of a Clarence Janne Zintheo, who was born in France of French and Swedish parents and belonged to the only Zintheo branch that had settled in the Seattle area. Clarence Janne has a fairly well documented life that does, however, not include Lucille. The second possibility pertains to two brothers, N.N. and another Clarence Janne (C.J.) Zintheo, who emigrated from France to the States and are probably related to the other Clarence Janne. C.J. worked for the US Department of Agriculture, while the other became a soldier. Maybe Lucille married a descendant of N.N. or C.J. Zintheo[1]. There is also another possibility as the *Western State Marriage Record Index* suggests: the index of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, a place less than 40 miles from Spokane, lists the complete marital information for Lucille White and Eldred J. Zinther, who married on June 20, 1912. Then, Lucille would have been sixteen[12]. Provided this is the right link, Lucille, embarking on a career in show business, changed her name from Zinther to Zintheo.

As it seems, Lucille was quite an energetic and somewhat liberated young woman. According to a friend of both Melba and Lucille, she left her first husband because he did not want her ice skating at night, this surely being not the whole story.

As a contemporary article from *Movie Weekly* reports[7], it was Lucille's sister Helen (Edna Ellen) who encouraged the hesitant Lucille to enter in a "Brains and Beauty" contest conducted by *Photoplay* in 1916. Incidentally, Helen worked for the magazine as a writer and press agent. If that article is right, Lucille had already shown considerable acting talent, her current profession, however, being a job at an office. In the end, Lucille mailed her photograph and was invited to take a test from which she emerged as a winner. It was actually the first contest of this kind announced by *Photoplay*. Other contestants of the same year who won were Mildred Lee, later playing leads with Universal Comedies as Mildred Moore, and Claire Lois Butler Lee (later Lois Lee), impersonating the Countess Helga in Rex Ingram's *Prisoner of Zenda* [11].

What exactly happened in the wake of Lucille's success with *Photoplay* can hardly be traced. Her picture had not only been submitted to the magazine judges, but also to a motion picture company that was cooperating with the magazine and unnamed outsiders. As one of the latest beauty queens she would be given a chance in celluloid industry, albeit without any further tutelage, as *Movie Weekly* writes. The magazine furthermore claims that for this very reason she went straight to Hollywood where upstart Vitagraph comedian Larry Semon was awaiting her for casting. But things seemed to have been a bit different. According to her grand niece Jessie Salmon, Lucille went from Spokane to New York. That she was in New York at a very early stage of her career is supported by an entry in the *Internet Broadway Database*: in 1917, she belonged as Lucille Zintheo at least to the opening night cast of *His Little Widows*, a musical production by "Broncho Billy" Anderson, playing opposite performers such as Carter DeHaven and his wife Flora Parker[11].

1 Elna Tymes in an email dated April 26, 2002.

Probably through her work with Anderson she moved into pictures. Lucille's first film appearance that survives is in the one-reel Semon comedy *Boodles and Bandits*, released June 24, 1918. Lucille, not yet in her typical star outfit, plays a she-sheriff, who manages to outclever dangerous Lightning Larry (Larry Semon). It is noteworthy that already in this picture she obtains the co-starring role after Semon. As Semon at that stage was commuting between Hollywood and New York to produce his pictures and continued with his vaudeville performances, they might very well have met more or less by chance while both appearing on stage.

After making *Boodles and Bandits*, Lucille also got a smaller role in *Big Boobs and Bathing Beauties*. For the time being, she disappears from Semon comedies only to return about seven months later as a featured extra in his *Scamps and Scandal*, which then starred Vera Steadman as Semon's foil. The Semon comedies were now steadily produced in Hollywood. It is intriguing to consider Lucille's part in relation to the entire film. She makes an only appearance as a wedding guest and when the camera focuses on the party she is highlighted while talking to a disguised Larry. The scene itself does not make much sense for the plot and apparently Lucille obtained attention for some very special reason. It probably marked Lucille's future reign as Larry's leading lady since from now on she claims the female part in the subsequent sixteen Semon comedies. Soon, she would change her name from Zintheo to Carlisle. The Carlisle-Semon duo became an institution in filmland and did as well on screen as in real life. Evidently, Semon created his best comedies while joining forces with Lucille, often granting her as much screen time as himself. Lucille had already been noticed by the critiques, who were in praise of her beauty and talent. She seemed the perfect counterpart to Semon, bringing in a humorous and cordial performance. She was convincing in whatever character she impersonated; be it the vamp in *Passing the Buck*, the innocent girlie in *The Simple Life* or the dignified aristocrat in *A Pair of Kings*. A May 12, 1920 newspaper review of *School Days* exemplifies the main tenor of the reviewers:

"Lucille Carlyle, Larry Semon's leading lady, is always attractive, but finds the pinafore and curls necessary to her role in School Days particularly becoming. She is a pleasant addition to the pictures in which Semon is endeavoring to immortalize the boob [...]"[4]

Now that Lucille and Larry had become so popular on the silver screen, their first *in person* appearance was awaited with much excitement. It would soon follow on stage of New York's *Kinema Theatre* in form of an all-too-short song and dance act that ensued every evening after the screening of the latest Semon comedy. The act had been staged by Larry himself and was approved of for its uniqueness[6].

Eventually, lightfoot Larry fell for Lucille. Unlike their usual romantic billing in film magazines, Ed Roberts, a former editor of *Photoplay*, did not mince matters. In his as famous as wicked expose of the "vices" of the film industry, an exemplar of what nasty little stories were done long before the *National Enquirer* age, Roberts terms the relationship of Lucille and Larry illicit[8]. And as if this was not enough, he describes Lucille as a man-eating, gold digging parasite and thus finds their liaison not a bilateral one. Allegedly, Larry – being *not much for looks* – ended up paying the bills for Lucille's extravagant life. They lived together and being only too well aware of the alerted moral authorities, Lucille and Larry tried to conceal their affair to the public:

"[Larry] bought [Lucille] a handsome light blue car – a limousine. [He] was her slave. He visited her apartments. Virtually [Larry] lived there – day and night. A paid chauffeur drove her to the studio. [Larry] drove

Lucille and Larry Semon in a candid from his comedy The Simple Life *(1919) of which only a five minute fragment is known to exist.*

a nondescript car. Of course, they did not arrive at the studio together. That would be too crude."[8]

Fact is that Larry was still married with his first wife, whom he had left behind with their mutual daughter in New York when Vitagraph settled in Hollywood. They would have divorced in 1919. And Lucille played obviously delaying tactics on Larry, as Roberts maliciously observes. Larry was only too interested in marrying her. Lucille, by contrast, was rather drawn to the hotel life of New York where she allegedly teamed up with other men to indulge in an insatiable lust for life:

"Every now and then she makes a trip to New York – fatigued from being too closely wedded to her art – she needs a change. [...] Her face is familiar in every hotel lobby on Broadway. She has many telephone calls – many midnight suppers. Every day [Larry] talks to [Lucille] from Los Angeles – if he fails to reach her he comes home

Stage hand Larry Semon and Al Thompson courting an unnerved Lucille in The Stage Hand *(1920).*

sick. She disappeared for two days on her last trip and they had to get a doctor for [Larry]."

A hint at their on-and-off romance can also be spotted in a *Times article* on Hollywood social events:

"Larry Semon had parked his comedy make-up and wore the moonlights; and lovely Lucille Carlisle, just to show there was no hard feeling, any more, was the partner of his terpsichorean joys and sorrows, looking very spankable in a kid outfit."[5]

Lucille was off the screen for Larry's complete 1921 season[7]. In the meantime, Larry had Maryon Aye and Norma Nichols under contract. Whether Lucille's absence was connected with any link to New York cannot be proven. Rob Stone mentions that Lucille spent the first three quarters of that year at the East coast to perform on the stages of New York City [10]: 283]. Other sources suggest her being hospitalized for a nervous breakdown,[see [7], 19]. This is probably not far-fetched as all her sisters, except for May, had sadly shown a certain mental instability, too. Helen, at some time, would commit suicide.

In 1922, Lucille returned for Semon's *The Show* and after another trip to New York for a Broadway musical comedy[2][4], she and Larry announced their engagement on July 13, 1922[9]. The wedding was to take place sometime in the fall[4], but it is not clear whether the two were actually married[9].

Lucille led the life of a star. She had her photograph taken by Witzel, wore expensive robes and took part in the important social events. She knew Houdini and his wife and their obsession with the afterlife. Lucille also knew Rudolph Valentino. He was very fond of her and Helen, who probably resided in Hollywood, too, and he brought each one a scarf from Spain. Her grand nieces still have them. Reportedly, Lucille was very good friends with Anna May Wong and one of the few non Chinese persons to be admitted to the real Chinatown of San Francisco.

Lucille never lost contact with her family and documents show how close she was to her relatives, paying them visits and being visited by them. When Lucille's pretty sister Melba came to see Lucille in Hollywood in about August 1920, it seems that the two even worked together.

2 This trip might be identical with the musical performance Stone mentions. Primary and secondary sources are unfortunately not precise about this.

Lucille after her nose operation (c. 1922) which lost her a part in the *Hunchback of Notre Dame.*

In a baby book, Melba noted down how much Lucille actually was attached to her family and that she preferred staying in Spokane much to returning back to Hollywood. One reason was Melba's daughter, Lucille Johnson, who was named for her aunt. Lucille never had children and loved the younger Lucille as if she was her own daughter.

Lucille made her last traceable screen appearance in Semon's two-reel comedy *No Wedding Bells* that reached box offices in 1923. Discords in her relationship with Larry led to difficulties in casting for his future productions[101:298]. Around that time, she was up for the part of Esmeralda in the *Hunchback of Notre Dame,* the sumptuous Universal production starring Lon Chaney. However, Lucille had her nose cosmetically altered making it smaller and the effect was not too pleasing. So she lost the part to Patsy Ruth Miller.

Lucille left the motion picture industry before 1930. She married Leland H. Millikin, a successful businessman who sold expensive cars, and remained married to him until her death. When Melba's husband passed away in 1932, Melba suffered a nervous breakdown. She asked that Lucille and Della raise her daughter, the younger Lucille, who was about thirteen years old then. They agreed to do this and lived together in Spokane, Seattle and Los Angeles. The younger Lucille stayed with them until she married in 1942.

It seems that Lucille kept her connections to show business alive and groomed her beautiful niece for a career, but was very disappointed when she learned that the younger Lucille wanted a family more. The younger Lucille actually continued the line of highly talented family members: May was a wonderful artist and painted in all mediums. She

Lucille with her niece Lucille Johnson years before she would raise her (c.1925).

had learned it from Della. The older Lucille also showed great talent for painting. Melba had a great business sense. A cousin was a Disney cartoonist. Young Lucille became a dancer in ballet and tap, a model and an artist in watercolor and oils. She attended *Hollywood Professional School* where she had a good friend who later became known as Cyd Charisse. Apart from inheriting the talents she also

A later portrait of Lucille, now Lucille Millikin, the *Voice* of the *Mothers of America.*

continued the near successes, as Jessie Salmon, her daughter, reports:

"At one time she was up for a part in *Gone with the Wind*. She had beautiful long auburn hair and for some silly reason she cut it. That was exactly not what to do."

Another cue of Lucille Carlisle's lasting connection with show business is that she did some radio before or during the war. She belonged to a group called *The Voice of Mothers of America*. The radio show was against U.S. involvement in the war.

Photos that survive show a still very beautiful Lucille. People who met her were truly impressed and recall her as a smart and worldly person, who loved baseball and had a great sense of humor. The bulk of memories about Lucille, however, center on her career, swallowing up most of her personality. Shirley Lagasse, Jessie's sister, who never got to know Lucille personally, reports:

"From what I know, my [Great] Aunt did a very noble thing in agreeing to raise my mom. I truly don't know what would have happened to her if Lucille had not agreed to raise her. My mother's mom was mentally broken when she lost her husband. Although she eventually recovered and remarried several times, she never took my mother back to raise her. My [Great] Aunt took on the financial responsibilities for both my mom and her own mother. Her husband [Leland] didn't always have a steady job, so much of the responsibility for making ends meet were on both my Aunt and my mother."

Lucille Carlisle died around 1957, in Los Angeles, probably because of a liver disorder. She had been a drinker like her father, but had given it up. The damage might have been done.

This article could not have been written without the invaluable help of Bob Dickson, Peter Kuehnlein, Joe Moore, Steve Rydzewski, Chris Seguin, Marilyn Slater and Elna Tymes. Very special thanks go to Lucille's grand nieces Jessie Salmon and Shirley Lagasse, who shared all their memories and family photos with me. Jessie also went to the pains of scanning a wealth of photos of which only a few could be picked for this publication.

FILMOGRAPHY AND OTHER APPEARANCES

According to the database of the *American Film Institute* that covers feature films during the period Lucille Carlisle was in the movies, no entry can be found for her. The Vitagraph films she appeared in were two-reelers, except for the one-reelers *Boodle and Bandits* and *Big Boobs and Bathing Beauties*.

HIS LITTLE WIDOWS (1917) Musical, Astor Theatre, Broadway. Opening: April 30, 1917, closing date unknown, total performances: 72. Opening Night Production Credits: Produced by G. M. "Broncho Billy" Anderson and L. Lawrence Weber. Music by William Schroeder; Book: Rida Johnson Young and William Carey Duncan. Lyrics: Rida Johnson Young and William Carey Duncan. Choreography: David Bennett. Opening Night Cast: Hattie Burke, Frances Cameron, Wallace Camp, Dwight Dana, Carter DeHaven, Robert Emmett Keane, Frank Lalor, Flora Parker, Charles Prince, Julia Ralph, John Robb, Violet Strathmore, Harry Tighe, Irma Von Nagy, Lucille Zintheo.

BOODLE AND BANDITS (1918) Lucille as a sheriff, who fights adamant Lightning Larry (Larry Semon).

BATHING BEAUTIES AND BIG BOOBS (1918) Lucille in a smaller role. She is the first girl Larry Semon, the big boob, chases on at the beach. Probably uncredited.

SCAMPS AND SCANDAL (1918) Lucille as an extra, impersonating a guest at a wedding, probably uncredited.

WELL, I'LL BE (1919) Lucille as a bandit in disguise, who first appears to be a helpless girl trapped by gangsters; credited as Lucille Zintheo.

PASSING THE BUCK (1919) Lucille impersonating a sneaky young woman, who plays her charms on Detective Larry only to get hold of a bag of gems.

THE STAR BOARDER (1919) Lucille plays the warden's daughter, who is madly in love with Larry Semon, a prisoner de luxe.

HIS HOME SWEET HOME (1919) Lucille as Larry's wife, mitigating the fight between Larry and his mother-in-law.

THE SIMPLE LIFE (1919) Lucille as Captain Tillie, leader of the farmerettes, soon to be marrying fool-hardy Larry Semon, the farmer's boy.

BETWEEN THE ACTS (1919) Lucille as a vamp, who gets property boy Larry Semon into all sorts of trouble by her winsome ways.

DULL CARE (1919) Lucille as an unfaithful young wife, who gets into matrimonial entanglements, protected and courted by Detective Larry.

DEW DROP INN (1919) Lucille, the picture actress, who chances upon revenue officer Larry Semon while she works on location and helps him in quest of moonshiners.

THE HEAD WAITER (1919) Lucille Zintheo as a pretty cashier in a restaurant, who takes pity on Larry (a poor guy) to pay his bill.

THE GROCERY CLERK (1920) Now Lucille Carlisle, who plays Larry's girl and the postmistress of a grocery store.

Stage act at *Tally's Kinema Theatre* (probably Broadway). Opening: February 1, 1920. Closing date unknown. Personal appearance after the screening of *Dew Drop Inn* in a song and dance act with Larry Semon and his Beauties Brigade. Staged by Larry Semon.

THE FLY COP (1920) Lucille is a cabaret queen at a dubious Chinese club, protected by Detective Larry Semon.

SCHOOL DAYS (1920) Lucille as a class mate of Larry, whom he later wants to marry.

SOLID CONCRETE (1920) Lucille plays the daughter of the boss of a marble quarry. Larry Semon, the boob, protects her against gangsters and she becomes his wife.

THE STAGE HAND (1920) Lucille as the prima donna of a show that would work well if stage hand Larry Semon was not around.

THE SUITOR (1920) Lucille is Larry's girl, though her rich father has other plans for her.

THE SPORTSMAN (1920) Lucille as a tourist's daughter, who gets locked up in a harem and is rescued by Larry Semon, the sportsman.

Broadway appearances in a musical comedy during the first three quarters of 1921. Unconfirmed.

THE SHOW (1922) Lucille as star of a fancy vaudeville house, whose jewels are stolen.

A PAIR OF KINGS (1922) Lucille as Princess Lucille, who is held in exile because King August (Larry Semon) has stolen the throne from her. A stranger (also Larry Semon) reinstates her to the throne[10:285].

GOLF (1922) Lucille playing two roles: a daughter, who is harrassed by a suitor and a girl with goose on a golf course.

THE COUNTER JUMPER (1922) Lucille as the beautiful Glorietta Hope, owner of a trading post employing handyman Larry Semon. She is chased by a fortune hunter (Oliver Hardy), who intends to marry her in order to steal her wealth[10:294].

THE AGENT (1922) Lucille as a federal agent, who goes undercover as a dance hall girl and co-operates with another federal agent, Larry Semon [10:292].

NO WEDDING BELLS (1923) Lucille plays a beautiful young girl whom Larry saves from the trials of a wicked Chinese.[10:297].

Radio programmes as Lucille Millikin, *The Voice of the Mother's of America* (1939-1941?)

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All photos are by courtesy of Jessie Salmon except where noted.

Victor Potel

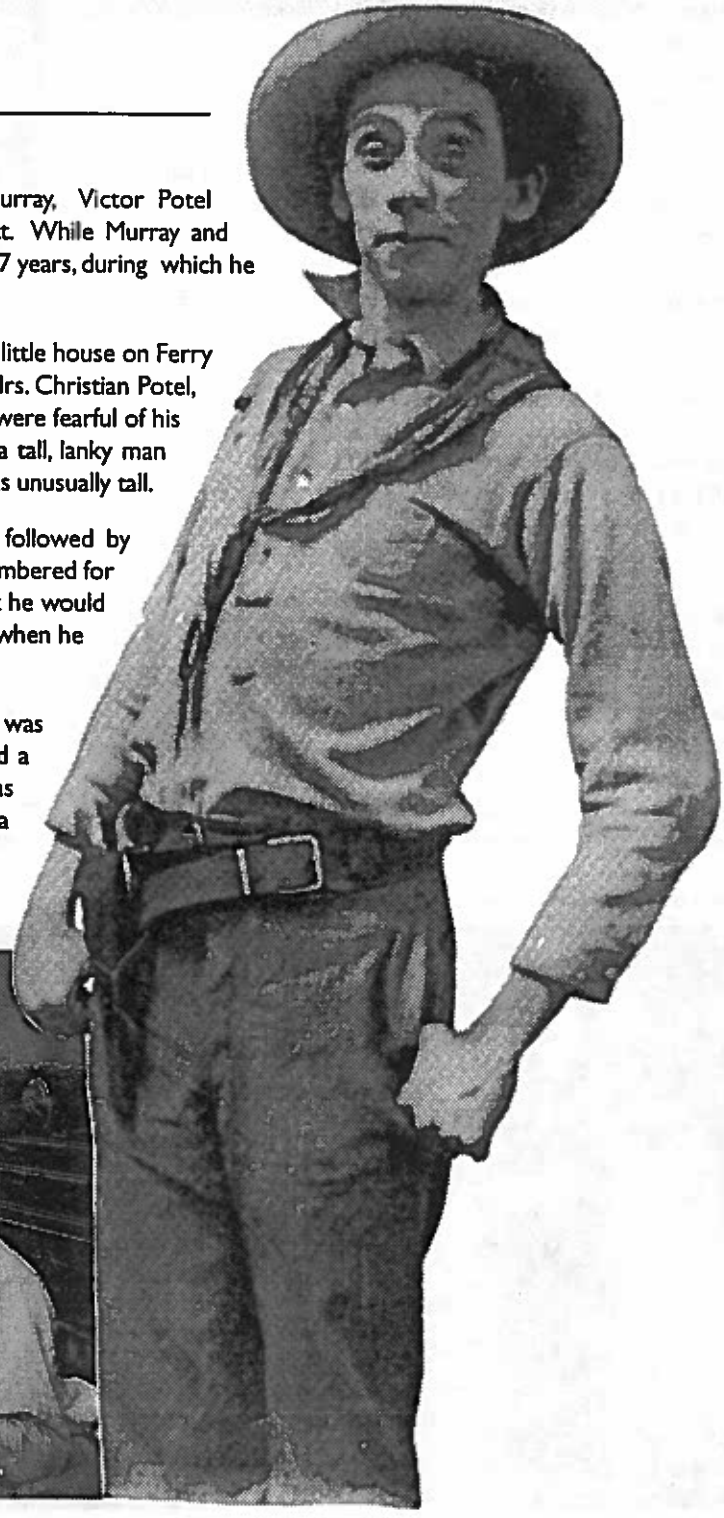
by David L. Smith

Like his fellow Hoosiers Louise Fazenda and Charlie Murray, Victor Potel achieved fame in the slapstick comedies of Mack Sennett. While Murray and Fazenda are better known, Potel's career would last over 37 years, during which he displayed an amazing versatility.

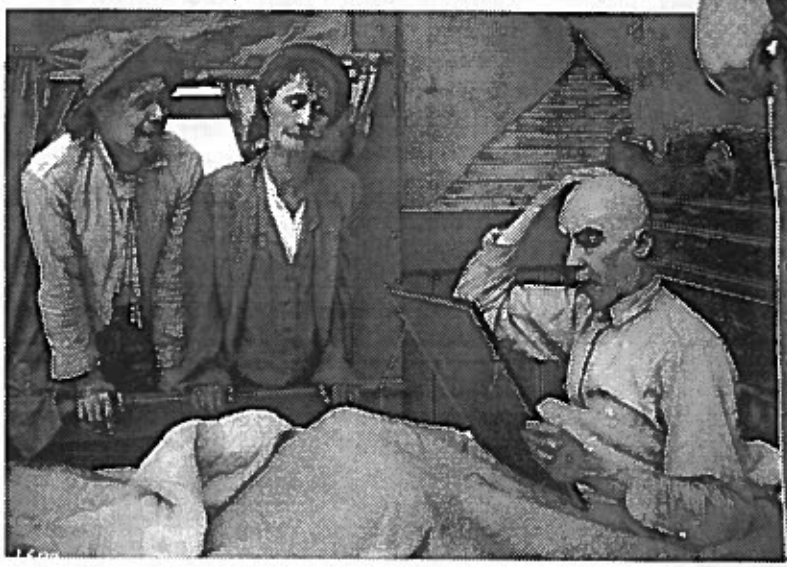
Victor Potel was born in Lafayette, Indiana October 12, 1889 in a little house on Ferry Street between Eighth and Ninth Streets. His parents, Dr. and Mrs. Christian Potel, became alarmed at the rate of his growth as a young man. They were fearful of his health and kept him indoors most of his youth. He grew into a tall, lanky man reaching the height of six feet and one inch. In those days, this was unusually tall.

His primary education was in a Lutheran school in Lafayette followed by enrollment in Lafayette High School. In High School he was remembered for his artistic talent. There was nothing to suggest at that time that he would become a rough and tumble slapstick comedian. His father died when he was a young man and Victor turned to painting for a livelihood.

After two years as a painter, he moved to Chicago where he was employed as an interior decorator. A little later, he was offered a position at Marshall Field and Company. It was while he was working at Marshall Field that he first attracted the attention of a



Harry Todd and Ben Turpin stop by to find a bald-headed Vic Potel in the 1915 Essanay comedy, **"Snakeville Twins"**



producer with the Essanay Company which was filming one and two reel comedies in Chicago. Essanay scholar David Kiehn tells us:

"It was G. M. "Broncho Billy" Anderson who discovered Victor Potel, in the summer of 1910 in Chicago. In an article in Views and Film Index August 27, 1910 p.12-3 Anderson discussed it at length. He had been wanting to produce a series of films about Hank and Lank, two characters that looked like the comic strip characters Mutt and Jeff. He had found a match for Jeff (Hank), the short guy, in Augustus Carney, who had been working at the Chicago Essanay studio while Anderson was in California making westerns. When Anderson got back to Chicago he discovered Victor while walking down the street and knew immediately that this was his Mutt character – Lank.

"Victor's first movie, however, was A Dog on Business, released September 7, 1910. His second film was Hank and Lank – Joy-Riding, released September 17, 1910. Nine Hank and Lank films were made (all of them split reel films), most of them in Chicago and some on the road, for Potel went west with Anderson and his Essanay troupe in September 1910. Potel also played small parts in Anderson's westerns. I haven't counted his credits in the westerns yet, but they could easily top 100. When the Hank and Lank series ended, Anderson almost immediately created the Alkali Ike films, beginning with Alkali Ike's Auto, released on May 20, 1911. Victor played a small part in that, and continued in the series, while also working in the regular westerns. It wasn't until Alkali Ike's Homecoming, released on April 19, 1913, that Potel's character name of Slippery Slim was mentioned for the first time."

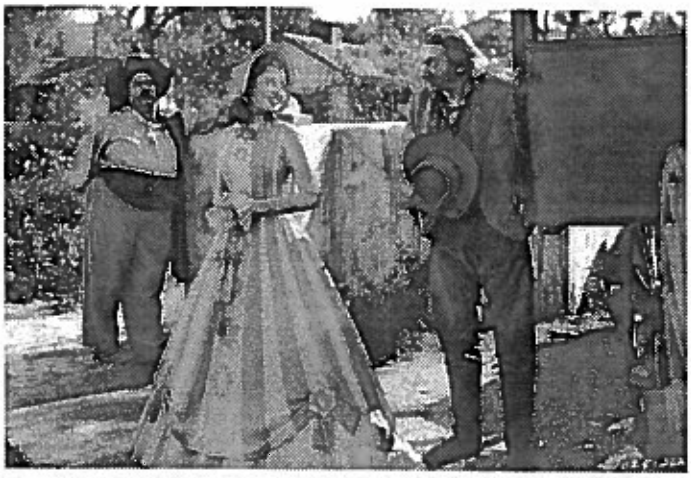
Hank and Lank proved to be so popular that several films were made for weekly release by the team. The films were all short and filled with good clean fun. Once Potel and Carney's box office appeal was established, they created new characters to fit into the Snakeville comedy series which began in 1911. This series featured new characters and rural-type humor. Snakeville was a mythical village which provided the setting for many of the Essanay comedies. Kiehn continues:

"When Carney left the series in November 1913 (for Universal), Snakeville came into its own, although the setting had been that fictional town all along. I counted 93 Snakeville Comedies with Potel in them. About that same time, Roy Clements was hired to direct the series and he continued doing so until September 1915, leaving for Universal. Victor left too, joining Clements in a series at Universal that was a takeoff on the Snakevilles, playing a character named Slim. Potel moved to Keystone in August 1916, but stayed only a short time. He was never a Keystone cop, as his Variety obit claimed. He worked in Sunshine Comedies for six months, briefly set up his own shop, the Victor Potel Homespun Comedy Company, but found more work in features working for all the big studios – Metro, Paramount, Ince, Goldwyn, First National and United Artists. Sound was no problem. He continued on the screen without a break."

Vic with unknown players in an unidentified comedy, c1918.

Soon his comic talents were in demand at other studios and he found steady work, eventually appearing in over 200 films in a career which lasted more than 37 years. He became a member of Preston Sturges' unofficial stock company, appearing in "The Great McGinty" (1940), "Christmas in July" (1940), "The Lady Eve" (1941), "Sullivan's Travels" (1941), "The Palm Beach

Vic with unknown players in an unidentified comedy of the twenties.



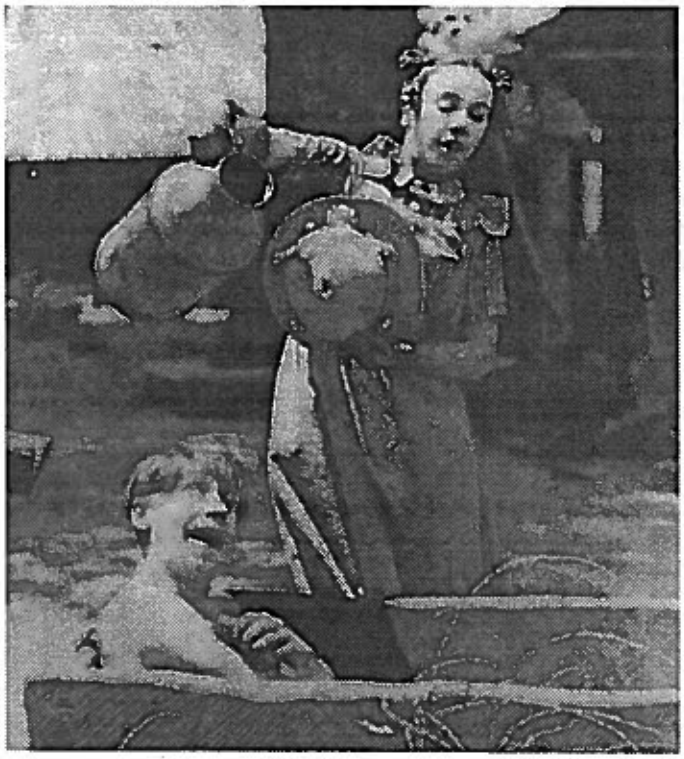
In **"Girl of the Golden West"** (MGM 1938) Potel, as stagecoach driver tells Jeanette MacDonald, "Hope this hold-up didn't upset you."

Story" (1942), "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek" (1944), "Hail the Conquering Hero" (1944), and "The Great Moment" (1944). He was uncredited in some of these films, while in others he had a nice supporting role. When Preston Sturges directed his last film in 1947, Victor Potel was in the cast. In "The Sin of Harold Diddlebock," he was "Professor Potelle," a seal trainer. Using a variation of his real name for a character he was playing, was something he did on a regular basis.

He was a particular favorite with western directors, appearing in at least 36 western films over the course of his career. He played opposite such Western stars as Broncho Billy, Tom Mix, Gary Cooper, Buster Crabbe, and Ken Maynard.

One of his more memorable comic portrayals was that of "Crowbar," the Indian in "The Egg and I" (1947). In it he worked with a fellow Hoosier, Marjorie Main, who was from Acton, Indiana. After Victor's death, the "Crowbar" character proved to be so popular, it was continued in the "Ma and Pa Kettle" series with a variety of other actors portraying the role.

In **"Quincy Adams Sawyer,"** Louise Fazenda helps Victor take a much needed bath.



He returned to Lafayette in the late 1920's as a guest of his uncle, Chris Stocker, who was a retired hotel manager. While there, he visited many spots where he played as a boy and renewed a number of boyhood acquaintances. Lafayette friends remembered Victor as a big, good-natured youth, always full of fun and perpetually congenial.

He died in Hollywood on March 8, 1947 at age 57, after a brief illness. He was survived by his wife, Mildred. He was busy to the end. In 1947, the year of his death, he completed five feature films.

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All photos from the author's collection

Special thanks to David Kiehn for his assistance with this article

My thanks to retired Professor of Telecommunications at Ball State University (in Muncie, Indiana), David L. Smith for his article on Victor Potel, taken from his forthcoming book tentatively entitled, "Hoosiers in Hollywood." Anyone (and everyone!) can get a preview of what the book will contain by going to his web site...

http://www.hoosiersinhollywood.com

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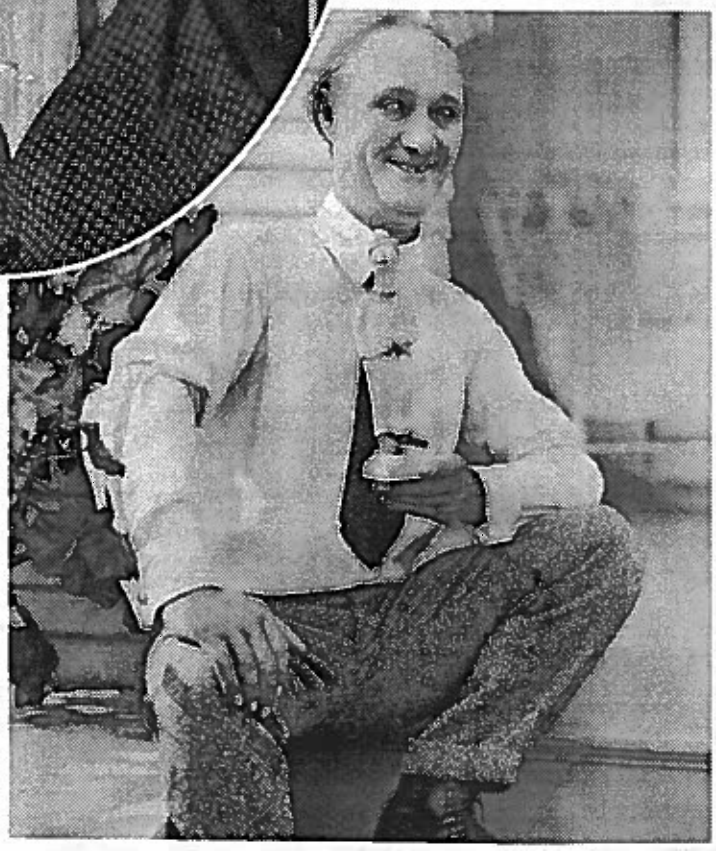
Ben Turpin
At Mack Sennett
Part Two

Soonafter the release and success of the 1919-1920 Turpin films (Uncle Tom Without the Cabin, Salome VS Shenandoah, Married Life, etc), enterprising companies bought up the rights to reissue earlier Turpin comedies in hopes of turning a profit from the Turpin craze. A New York based operation, Film Specials, distributed a series of Jolly Comedies which included several retitled Turpin-Essanay shorts. The Warner Brothers were another one of the first to buy the rights to several early Turpin Essanay one-reelers. The Cameo Film Company of Chicago handled several of the Vogue reissues, and later in 1923 Paramount began re-releasing most if not all of their earlier Sennett's.

In England in 1920, cartoonist George Wakefield began featuring Ben and Charlie Lynn in their own series of comic adventures in the pages of Film Fun and in 1921 a company was formed in Chicago which produced tens of thousands of Ben Turpin statuettes. Ben stated, "Best likeness I ever had moulded. Caricature? Ridiculous! It couldn't have been more faithfully cast if I had laid down and had Plaster of Paris poured all over me and a death mask made of my face. My wife says it's better'n any photograph I ever had taken."

By 1921 Mack Sennett had completed production on the last of his two-reelers for Paramount. Almost a year earlier on June 1, 1920, Sennett joined forces with a group of prominent Hollywood men including Marshall Neilan, Maurice Tourneur, Thomas Ince, Allan Dwan, J. Parker Read, Jr., and George Loan Tucker, to form



Ben posing with one of tens of thousands of miniature Turpin statuettes.

Associated Producers for the purpose of distributing the motion picture productions which each would make for a period of five years beginning September 1st, 1920.

After his success in the feature Married Life, Turpin took it easy and did very little acting for Sennett having been on the road most of the time to help promote the film. When Ben was back, he made several cameo appearances in the Sennett shorts of his co-workers before getting his next script, **She Sighed by the Seaside:**

It was the tale of a sentimental girl (Marie Prevost) who sought a Romeo by the sad sea waves and found – three. First she encounters the dashing type, played by Jimmy Finlayson with rare unction then she meets the mysterious lover, Charlie Lynn (aka Conklin), with his walrus mustache and the "do or die" manner. The rivalry excited by the heroine in the hearts of these two develops a series of funny episodes that extend from the shore line far out to sea. It is there – that is, far out at sea – that the pretty Marie meets her real hero, the dauntless Ben Turpin, courageous lifeguard and savior of a thousand drowning darlings. Oddly, the film was shelved for about a year until finally being released on May 22, 1921 for Associated Producers. Shortly after the start of the film, Sennett began work in the summer of 1920 on Ben Turpin's second feature, **A Small Town Idol:**

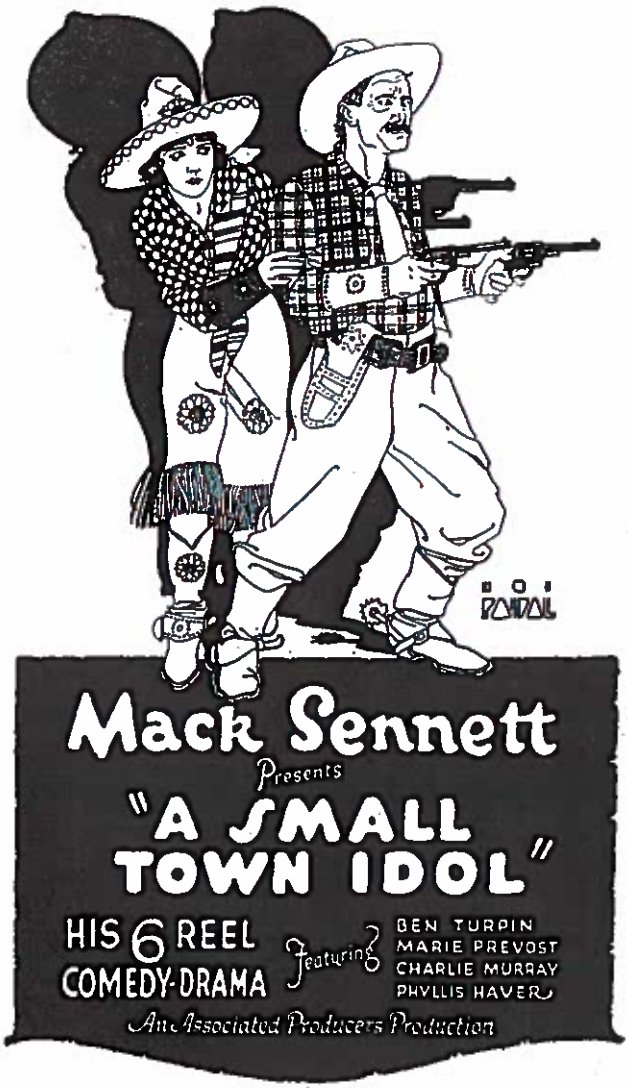
Passionately and madly in love with the village belle, Phyllis Haver, Ben's troubles begin at the close of the very first episode, which shows a crowd at a race-track with Ben the jockey hero riding at brief notice to a victory. His triumph is quickly turned to disgrace by the machinations of J. Wellington Jones (Jimmy Finlayson) who, with his henchmen and fellow plotters, succeeds in damning the reputation of the small town idol so that he is forced to flee to the city.

In the city Ben has no better luck than in the country. An evil genius still pursues him and he seeks death. He believes he will find surcease from his sorrows in a self-inflicted finish that shall not leave behind him the appearance of suicide. He "doubles" for the hero of a thrilling motion picture in a climax scene wherein the noble youth is shown plunging from a bridge to the waters, hundreds of feet beneath. By some mischance, Ben's dive is a great success. He can't even commit suicide, and, greatly against his will, he is given the hero's role and so finishes out the great "western thriller," the heroine of which is the piquant Marie Prevost. It is in this "picture within a picture," incidentally, that the grand aggregation of beauty, referred to in the opening paragraphs, is shown in a "pageantry of perfect loveliness."

A personal appearance is arranged for the village theater and Ben returns in triumph. The lost son comes home again, the prodigal is fed upon the fatted calf and there is joy over the repenting one – only Ben isn't repenting, since he never did anything to repent of.

But things turn out far differently from his dreams. The villian gets busy, weaves new webs for his innocent feet to stumble upon, and finally, nothing less than a murder charge is brought up against him. The fair Phyllis is again abused in her affections concerning him and is led to believe the worst – from all which evils Ben is finally directed by an ingenious twist in the story which brings the loving pair together and puts the villian where he belongs.

Turpin later recalled, "Another funny sequence was in 'The Small Town Idol' where I had to sit next to a lion, and a real live one at that. I'll never forget it. They took a scene of me sitting next to him on a bench. I perched as far at the end as possible. The director said: 'That was very good. Now we will take it sitting a little closer.' Boy, I sure left that bench in a hurry and up to my dressing room I went, crochetingly, that is, mile a minute. No more lions for me!"



Jimmy Finlayson lures Maries Prevost away from our life guard hero in ***She Sighed by the Seaside.***

BEN TURPIN SERIES PLANNED FOR ASSOCIATED FIRST NATIONAL

Included in the activities mapped out by Mack Sennett for the ensuing twelve months are plans for a Ben Turpin series to be released by Associated Producers, Inc. The hero of "A Small Town Idol" will be disclosed in perhaps twelve two-reel fantastic comedies in which his genius will be revealed from as many angles as he has direction of vision.

ALREADY STARTED

The first of the series is well under way and will be ready for release by Associated Producers in the near future. Mal St. Clair is directing it under the supervision of Sennett. Included in Turpin's support are Phyllis Haver, Harriet Hammond, Billy Bevan and George O'Hara.

Moving Picture World, May 28, 1921

Ben and Phyllis Haver don't appreciate Billy Bevan's intrusions in ***Bright Eyes.***

In ***Love and Doughnuts****, Ben and Phyllis have the goods on Billy Bevan*

Turpin told an interviewer regarding the AP comedies in 1921: "What I would like to do in pictures is to burlesque the present big features. Or the old, familiar plays. 'Uncle Tom Without the Cabin,' was a big success, and so was 'Home Talent.' I think 'Love's Outcast' will be good, and we are sure putting in a lot of work on these specials of mine, because, after such a long time of hard knocks, I want to put my best work in them. Roy Del Ruth is my director, and he is a good one. Mr. Sennett and all of us lay out the story, and then Roy and I work out the gags. It takes about a month of hard work to make one of these two-reelers, just as long as it takes to make a big feature, and if a thing isn't right, we do it over and over again."

TURPIN A HIT IN "LOVE'S OUTCAST"

That Mack Sennett, "King of Comedy," has shown foresight and knowledge of public taste in starring Ben Turpin is reflected in the reception accorded the strabismic comedian in his first starring vehicle, "Love's Outcast." This two-reel comedy, scheduled for release by Associated Producers on July 3, played a pre-release engagement of one week at the California Theatre in Los Angeles recently, co-headlining the bill with the feature and walking off with the comedy honors. The picture was a big hit.

Moving Picture World, July 16, 1921

Moving Picture World's E.W. reviewed the film:

Ben Turpin is the bright, particular star of this two-reel Mack Sennett comedy, which is genuinely amusing without the aid of any slapstick by-play. Most of the action takes place in a court room, where Ben's supposed wife is suing him for divorce. The defendant is charged with being a gay deceiver, who proves irresistible to women. The trial is made very funny by the clever acting of the handsome Mr. Turpin, and the picture ends in a roar of merriment when the defendant proves his innocence by showing that he had risked his life saving the correspondent from a vicious bull, which found in her company. The scene of that encounter with the bull is immense. Ben rides him and then throws him, and Paul Revere has nothing on him – Turpin, not the bull. The subtitles are humorous. At the finish the happy wife says invitingly to Ben, "Come home, and throw a few bulls for the children."

TURPIN VISITS CHICAGO

Ben Turpin visited Chicago for the first time in ten years, Friday, July 22, where he was met by Ben Beadell, representative for the star, who is planning a tour of personal appearances – the first he has ever made. The famous comedian whose career is of special interest to Chicagoans because of the fact that it started here at the Essanay studio, was hailed with enthusiasm at the station, and was given generous recognition by the dailies. Mr. Beadell announces July 24 as the first booking date of Turpin's tour, when he will appear at the Strand Theatre, Milwaukee for one week. Following that he will appear at McVicker's for one week, and beginning August 8, at the Rialto.

Moving Picture World, Aug 6, 1921, pg 593

BEN TURPIN ON STAGE

"Meeting the public need hold no terrors for the screen comedian," is the verdict of Ben Turpin, who has just embarked on a tour of personal appearances in the Middle West, and whose reception at McVicker's, on the Jayeles chain, proved that his Chicago friends are legion.

"It may not be so advisable for the star whose reputation depends upon personal beauty," he suggested, "but I don't have any of his worries. On the contrary, it is my ambition to get just what he would do anything to avoid getting "a laugh out of the public."

And Ben Turpin got what he went after. A few famous flops, a few famous gags, a few famous glances, and the public was his. His stage appearance was preceded by one of his late pictures, "She Sighed by the Seaside."

Moving Picture World, Aug 20, 1921, pg 792

"I'm supposed to have a thirteen week vacation, but if Mr. Sennett asks me if I'm rested when I get back, I'll just pass away!

"When I'm home I get up at five o'clock in the morning, have a swim and a round or two of boxing with my Japanese chauffeur, breakfast, and by nine I'm at the studio and ready for work. At four-thirty I'm through; at eight I'm in bed.

"Yes, I enjoy my work in pictures, but it's mighty hard. To make a two-reel comedy takes on the average of six weeks. And do you know how long it took to make "A Small Town Idol?" Seven months! I never was so sick of anything in my life as I was of that picture. The same old thing, it began to seem like, everyday.

"I've had big offers to leave Sennett. I had one offer recently that would have meant a quarter of a million salary for me. But why? Charlie Chaplin and 'Fatty" Arbuckle – before the scandal – are the only two ex-Sennett comedians who have made a success away from Sennett. I get a good salary and I'm happy with Mr. Sennett. I consider him the greatest producer of comedy today. I just signed a new two-year contract with him. Because I did this before my old contract expired, I got a nice little bonus."

Movie Weekly, Oct 22, 1921, Vol 1, #37, pg 19

Ben doesn't appreciate Jack Richardson's flirting with his girl, Phyllis Haver, in ***Step Forward.***

Ben and Phyllis Haver making their own ***Home Made Movies.***

In **Bright Eyes** (12/24/21), Dot Farley and her husband were giving a big reception to announce the engagement to their niece, Harriet Hammond. The man was Jack Richardson, a bogus count who had succeeded in imposing on them. Ben Turpin arrived, and after troubles with Billy Bevan the butler, who was throwing him out at once, managed to deliver a letter to Dot's husband, Bud Ross. It was from an old friend of his, Ben's uncle, who reminded him that they always meant to have Ben and Harriet marry each other, and added the information that Ben was the owner of hundreds of oil wells, worth millions! To break the engagement to Richardson then and there seemed the only natural thing to do.

Ben was ushered upstairs with the reluctant butler for a valet. He immediately mistook Phyllis, the pretty chambermaid, for the Harriet he was to marry, and started an ardent flirtation. Between Farley and Bevan, who was furiously jealous, he was finally convinced of his mistake and went downstairs to meet the real Harriet, who fainted away at the sight of him. While the family were entertaining Ben at the golf course, it appeared that the real cause of Harriet's distress was not her new lover's eyes but the fact that she wanted to marry the chauffer, George O'Hara. She took every chance to steal away with him, while Ben took some chances to make love to Phyllis. Meanwhile Richardson, let back into the house by the chef, Kalla Pasha, revenged himself for the loss of girl and fortune by stealing the family jewels.

On the day of Ben and Harriet's marriage, a number of mishaps delayed the ceremony, such as the telegram stating that Ben lost all his wells and had no money at all. Turpin is put to work in the kitchen and a search for the count begins. Just when Harriet and Richardson are once again ready to be married, Ben's uncle arrives, laughs at the telegram (which was forged by Harriet and George), saying Ben not only had all his old wells but forty new ones! A chase for Turpin takes place, but all is lost. Ben and Phyllis are united and together they find their greatest happiness.

As a manager of a one-horse car, being both motorman and conductor in **Step Forward** (4/13/22), Turpin politely assists a family of fifty to board, unconscious of the fact that forty-nine of the children are under five and ride free, and allows a mother to amuse its child by ringing up fares. This little pleasure costs him a small fortune as an inspector happens to come along. Teddy is tied to the back of the car to guard a valise of tools and when a thief tries to make off with them, the dog pursues, dragging the trolley backwards with him in his enthusiastic chase.

At the end of his day's work Ben rushes to his sweetheart, Phyllis Haver, for whom he has just built a modest home, and finds her ready to enter the new car she has decided he will buy for her. The car happens to be a stolen one and Turpin is picked up and landed behind bars. In the next cell he discovers the salesman who sold him the car, Charlie Conklin (making a return to Sennett), who was pinched trying to steal another one in which a policeman was asleep. Mad with the lust for revenge, Ben tears the separating wall to pieces and pounds the thief into black and blue spots. They wreck the jail with their pugilistic outburst and Ben escapes. He finds his sweetheart Phyllis Haver and they are married. He takes her to the new home only to discover that a donkey has assumed squatter's rights. All attempts to drive him off are in vain, coaxing and force being alike unavailing, until Ben's sweetheart resorts to music. The donkey waltzes around finally making his exit by the window.

Determined to start life by giving his wife her heart's desire, which is a car, Ben rigs up a queer contraption of his own in which they ride away on their honeymoon with the trolley wires from the power line supplying the electricity.

In **Home Made Movies** (7/15/22), a family of theater owners who have a little motion picture house become dissatisfied with the pictures they are getting and decide to make their own. Dot Farley furnishes a story which she herself has written and they all start out to make a snow picture in California in the middle of summer. They encounter many difficulties, not the least of which occurs when a trained bear on the sidelines gets into a tank of water to keep cool. The tank is filled with live fish and the bear starts to play with them as a love scene in the next set is being enacted by Ben and Phyllis. The bear slaps at one of the fish and knocks it out of the tank and through the air. It lands down the back of the fur coat Phyllis is wearing and she squirms around in an effort to get rid of it without spoiling the scene. Ben thinks she is putting feeling into her work and does likewise. Finally she whispers to him and he puts his hand down her back in an effort to recover the fish. This is too much for George Cooper, her father and he rushes into the set and stops the action. The company next attempts to make a scene with the aid of a moving panorama which will show Ben dashing over the frozen trails of the North to rescue Phyllis who has supposedly been captured by a notorious dance hall keeper, Black Dan. They get well started when a fire starts and general confusion results, all of which though not intended for the picture is photographed by the ambitious cameraman and included in the finished product, which is finally shown before an audience for the benefit of two prospective buyers of the film. The result is that the picture is anything but a huge success and they walk out on it. It seems to have made a hit with the audience, however, for when they see the author running over the panorama minus her skirt they madly yell, "Speech!

Speech!" as the picture closes in a free for all fight engaged in by the amateur producers who occupy a box to themselves.

Fifteen years later in 1937 Ben recalled a silly situation during the filming of Home Made Movies: "The funniest incidents? Well, that is hard to say. There are so many of them in one's life yet when one is called upon to name them they just escape you. However I do remember one picture I made called 'Home Made Movies' (made in the summer). It was very, very hot. I was dressed like an Eskimo and we took snow scenes and dog sleds on a revolving panorama. It was so hot that I perspired something awful and the skin that I was wearing, a cow or something, had not been thoroughly tanned, for the stench of it was terrific. The property man and leading lady could hardly come near me, but they fixed it up. They got a lot of lavender water and poured it all over the skin and then it was okay. In those days they made artificial snow of very fine sawdust, salt and whitening, using a blowfan to make blizzard scenes. I worked five weeks on that picture and after I got through, between the sawdust, whitening and salt, I could spit two by fours. I think that was one of the funniest incidents."

TURPIN CONVALESCING FOLLOWING OPERATION

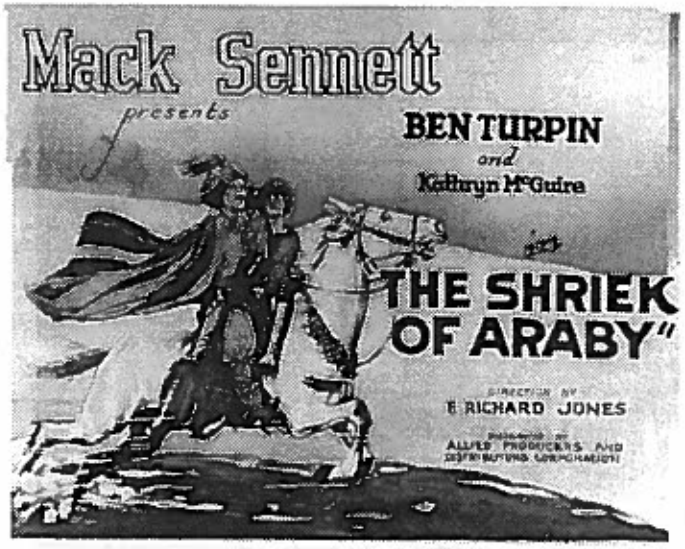
Los Angeles, Nov. 21 – Unbeknown to the motion picture colony, Ben Turpin, famous cross-eyed comedian, underwent a serious operation at the California Lutheran Hospital last week and is now slowly but surely recuperating at his home in Hollywood.

Although in a serious condition for two days, according to report, he will soon again resume the roles that have won for him a prominent place in the motion picture firmament. The nature of the comedian's illness could not be ascertained at this time.

Exhibitors Herald, Dec 2, 1922, pg 37

On February 15th, 1923, Sennett signed a distribution contract with the Pathe organization which called for the production of 52 two-reel comedies a year. Pathe could now boast of its affiliation with two of the biggest laugh producers, Hal Roach and Mack Sennett. Four days after the Pathe signing, Turpin signed a new 42-week contract that would pay him $2000 the first twenty-six weeks, $1250 the next five weeks, $750. during the next two weeks, and $1500 weekly for the last nine weeks. The contract also specified that Turpin would not appear in more than nine Pathecomedies during the engagement.

Ben next appeared in yet another feature for Sennett, and his last, **The Shriek of Araby**. Time magazine wrote, "It must be said that (Turpin's) present opus is sniffing at the heels of true art. Mr. Turpin's burlesque places a permanent tombstone over the twin-Bedouin story of the desert. He invades the Sahara, acquires sovereignty over a native tent colony, marries the American beauty which he finds blooming beneath a



Dot Farley administers the good old-fashioned spanking to her son as Pricilla Bonner looks on in ***Pitfalls of a Big City.***

nearby dune. His bride is carried off by a wolf in Sheik's clothing. Needless to say, a small menagerie of camels, ostriches, and lions join happily in the chase which terminates in the private swimming pool of the Sheik's harem."

Turpin's first release for the new distributor, Pathe, **Where's My Wandering Boy This Evening?** (7/8/23) was the old, old story of the country boy and the sophisticated city girl. Ben, though in love and engaged to the farmer's daughter (Pricilla Bonner), falls victim to the charms of the city girl (Madeline Hurlock). The climax comes when Ben, attempting to ape the city man's manners, takes a horseback ride with the vamp. They are overtaken by a thunderstorm and seeking shelter, they are forced by the elements to remain there all night. With their return the following morning to the old farm, Ben's cross-eyed mother, played by Dot Farley reprising the part she began in A Small Town Idol, induces him to marry the girl to sustain her reputation. But the girl pretending to feel flattered departs on the eve of the wedding taking the expected bridegroom's worldly savings with her. Ben comes to with a shock, and realizes that the country girl is the only girl after all, and he is forgiven by her.

SAYS TURPIN MAKES WORLD HAPPIER

As a result of a personal interview with Ben Turpin, Dr. I. L. Nasher, celebrated psychoanalist and author of standard medical works, has added Ben Turpin, the Pathe-Sennett comedian, to his list of "specimens"

With Billy Armstrong and Madeline Hurlock in ***Asleep at the Switch.***

Kewpie Morgan leaves Ben to his fate in ***The Daredevil.***

who make the world "happier and happier every day." This is one of Dr. Nasher's own expressions, which he recently used in a widely published newspaper article analyzing the methods of famous fun-makers, declaring they exert a powerful influence for health and contentment.

Moving Picture World, Aug 18, 1923, pg 584

In a sequel to his previous release, **Pitfalls of a Big City** (9/2/23) continued with our hero back living on the farm where the previous summer the city vamp had spent a short vacation. But it was not too short to captivate the heart of the simple country youth, and when the fair deceiver de-parted, she took with her our hero's savings. But, despite this he believed her true. He goes to the city in search of her and finds her living in a luxurious apartment and to add to his disappointment when she spurns him, she informs him that she is married. Despite all this, his infatuation still persists and he sees no other way out for himself but to end it all. Suddenly comes the grim determination to visit once more the cruel heartless siren and he is about to shoot her when his mother appears on the scene and administers the good old-fashioned motherly spanking. Rodney once more returns to the farm. The film marked the return, although brief, of Sennett favorite, Mack Swain.

In **Asleep at the Switch** (10/14/23), Turpin is a switchman at the little jerk water station in Woodenhead where the lively scenes of life are few and far between. One day a dramatic troop are forced through circumstances to remain in the one-horse town and Ben is treated to the time of his life. A checkers game is indulged in in which Ben, shrewd player though he is, is forced to lose a lot of money because of the shrewd keen eye of the sagacious dog, Cameo. Of course a girl is mixed up in the affair and Ben, who would be the hero, tries a series of stunts and saves the girl from the villian, not knowing that the villian and the girl are old pals. He starts in pursuit and after a number of thrilling adventures, eventually rescues the girl who undergoes a change of mind and weds the delighted Ben.

The Daredevil (11/25/23), was a travesty on the making of serials and presented Ben as a cowboy who gets a job doubling for the hero in the thrill and "unpleasant" situations. It is treated in the farcical Sennett-way, poking fun at the most serious situations.

One day when a particularly perilous stunt is to be performed, the hero calls for a volunteer. Ben's histrionic soul is aroused and he attempts and successfully performs the stunt. From that time on, no deed is too reckless, no thrill too thrilling for Ben, and he makes his career as a famous actor. He gets into all sorts of scrapes and messes things up generally. There is a lot of amusing nonsense, especially the scene where the movie company gets the firemen away from a fire until they can grab some scenes. MPW thought "while not up to the best of the Sennett offerings, it contains several humorous situations and should prove satisfactory for the average audience."

In **Ten Dollars or Ten Days** (1/6/24), Ben is a soda clerk and in love with the cashier of the same store, Irene Lentz. Of course, he has a rival in Harry Gribbon, who, by day is a salesman, and by night a burglar. Gribbon's bold attempts to rob the employer succeeds, and the blame is placed on Ben. But fate takes a kindly hand, straightens out the tangle, the money is recovered and Ben wins the girl.

By late 1923 Carrie Turpin had become completely deaf, she would never hear again, the doctors said. But Ben, devout Catholic that he was, believed differently. Taking some time off, together he and his wife made the long journey to the shrine of Saint Anne de Beaupre, near her birthplace in Quebec, where so many miracles were said to have taken place. Every day for the novena of nine days Mrs. Turpin and Ben, on their knees, made the long toilsome ascent of the twenty-seven steps leading to the altar. And then one day in their hotel room he forgot and spoke to her in an ordinary tone and she answered him! The first thing she did was to go and see one of Ben's pictures so that she could hear the laughter and applause.

From an unidentified movie magazine source of 1924: "Ben Turpin is scared – just plain scared. Recently, while the comedian and his wife were on a vacation in Canada, they attended church in St. Anne de Beaupre and Mrs. Turpin's hearing was restored. They knelt for prayer and, arising, Mrs. Turpin declared she had regained her hearing.

Now Ben is more than a trifle worried. He is afraid someone will have faith enough to set his eyes straight and that would never do."

But the miracle did not last. Ben Turpin said little at the studio of his home life, but his directors knew that he must have an hour off every

Ben and Carrie in happier times.

noon to go home to lunch in, and that he would never work after four-thirty in the afternoons or on Sundays, so that he could spend more time with his wife. They had always been a lonely little couple without children, or the knack of making acquaintances. Now and then the parish priest would come to dine at their big empty house. And there was Kate – the husky proprietress of Kate's Place, the studio lunch where Ben acted as guide, philosopher and friend. Sometimes Kate visited the Turpins and sat ill at ease while the servants waited on her. Now and then the studio persuaded them to appear at a cafe opening or a preview. And that was their life. Perhaps their loneliness drew them closer together.

TURPIN BUSY AGAIN

After a period of absence from the Mack Sennett studio, Ben Turpin is back at last and ready for work on the next of his series of two-reel comedies for release by Pathe. Preliminaries were rapidly completed for the filming of "North of 57," a burlesque on a popular novel. Last week Director Del Lord and a company of Sennett comedians left for Truckee, Cal., for several weeks' location work in the snow country.

Moving Picture World, April 1924

"North of 57" was eventually released as **YUKON JAKE** (6/8/24), one of this writer's favorite Turpin films. Ben is Cyclone Bill, a gum-shoeing sheriff with wriggly eyes and quick on the trigger. He is called in to quell the disturbances raised by Yukon Jake, an Eskimo bad man played by Kalla Pasha. Yukon Jake along with his henchmen abduct the daughter of the Mayor of the town, Bud Ross, and Ben sets out in pursuit to rescue her. A chase takes them from one part of the country to Alaska (by clever split-screen technique) where Ben, after many heart-breaking struggles succeeded in rescuing the girl and bringing back the bandit terrors, Pasha and Richardson, in hand-cuffs.
In his autobiography, King of Comedy, Sennett wrote of a story told him by one of his best directors, Del Lord:

Once when we had leased a special train to take a company to Lake Tahoe, scheduled to leave at seven in the evening, Del Lord found Mr. Turpin hitting crescendo in the throes of a crying jag. On such occasions Turpin demanded the attentions of his attorney, his business manager, and his priest.
When Del arrived at the roaring Turpin establishment, Ben had decided that he was all right, but that for reasons obscure to everyone else, his wife (the deaf one) was dying.

Whether or not Turpin was taken seriously by his director or the studio at the time, it was however true that Carrie Turpin's health was fast declining. Trouper that he was, Ben put his best foot forward in the production and the resultant film is a Turpin classic. Nearly a year after the film's release, poet/author Edgar E. Paramore sued Sennett for copyright which Paramore claimed Sennett's film (Yukon Jake) was an infringement. In the end, Paramore was awarded $2500 in damages.

Romeo and Juliet (8/3/24) Ben Turpin who thinks he has the prettiest girl in town (Alice Day) engaged to him is foiled by his prospective father-in-law and in revenge for his throw-down, he goes to the city to become an actor and incidentally meets Mlle. Midnight (Natalie Kingston), a well known local vamp. He becomes engaged and not knowing of the woman's past, he is confronted with some local gossip and photographs determining him to break the engagement but the vamp decides otherwise and Turpin proceeds to take the part of Romeo in a local amateur theatrical. All goes well until the second act, when something goes wrong with the props and Turpin in an attempt to scale the Castle Wall is nearly drowned in the improvised mote. He is rescued however– the vamp turns him loose and he returns again to his oldtime sweetheart.

In her article for Picture Play, February 1926, Dorothy Wooldridge told us Why Ben Turpin Left the Screen:

You probably laughed uproariously when you saw Ben Turpin as Romeo in Mack Sennett's farce, "Romeo and Juliet." You found it very amusing when that cross-eyed comedian looked mournfully toward the ceiling after his calico-clad girl had rejected him, and began singing Tosti's "Good-bye Forever." You wondered how he could make such realistic tears course down his cheeks.
"Great stuff!" you howled when they dropped him into a moat surrounding a castle where another of his Juliets lived.
"Look at that egg getting cracked with the stick of firewood!" you chortled. "How does he keep from being hurt?"
You shouted in glee when Juliet's dad and the successive suitor slammed Ben out of the house, and you giggled when they dropped him onto a runaway mule.
You hooted when he strummed a guitar and sang to his love.
"He's a sorrowful-looking boob, isn't he?" you remarked.
Yes, he was a sorrowful-looking boob, and by this time most of the world knows why. Ben Turpin's wife was marked for death when he made that picture.
The doctors had just told him so. And behind his mask of buffoonery, as he went through scene after scene, his heart was bleeding. His nerves were on the ragged edge. He had known little sleep for weeks. His interest was not in the play. But he stuck to his role until the last shot was taken.
Then he went home. His wife, with blindness and deafness creeping upon her, reached a feeble hand from the coverlets and said, "Ben, if the time is coming when I can't see you nor hear your voice, I don't want to live. I couldn't bear it. I want you now – all the time. Please don't leave me!"
And because Ben never left her from that day until the day she died, is the reason why you have not seen him on the screen for some time, except in old pictures.

Three Foolish Weeks (9/14/24) Baron St. Clair (Ben Turpin) starts on a new conquest of hearts and selects as his victim the Queen of Anchovia. Fortune favors him when he rescues the Queen from a runaway accident. The chase is a long one and the pair seek shelter in the Witch's Inn. The gallant Baron, unable to restrain his wooing proclivities, attempts to make love to the innkeeper's daughter – a terrific battle ensues – and the luckless Baron is routed into the darkness.

MPW reviewed the film on September 13, 1924:
Ben Turpin makes of the romantic the ridiculous in Three Foolish Weeks. Under the direction of Ed Kennedy and Reggie Morris, Turpin is supported by Madeline Hurlock, Billy Bevan, William Lowery and Judy King. This comedy is of the thriller type. Turpin as a Count is compelled through circumstance to rescue a restless princess from her runaway steeds. The timely arrival of night forces them to seek refuge in a house

The Baron St. Clair playing games in ***Three Foolish Weeks.***

by the wayside. There the comedy supplies the most humor. Turpin, again through circumstance, is chased by the father of the house from one bedroom to the other. In each room he compromises himself and one of the father's fair daughters. Eating breakfast in a bath of perfume and lashing himself amidships with a pair of corsets get the laughs right at the comedy's opening. This offering should prove a great success, especially with the Turpin fans.

About this time, according to friends, Ben was doing his own housework to be near his sick wife who could not stand his absence and became irritated with their servants. Soon they gave up the big house on Cannon Drive and moved into one of Ben's cottages at 1059 N. St. Andrews Place, a simple bungalow with elegant walls of chicken wire. To add to his troubles, Ben broke his leg during the filming of his comedy, "The Reel Virginian."

In **The Reel Virginian** (10/26/24), Rodney St. Clair (Ben), a cowpuncher of the Western plains, is violently in love with the newly-arrived school teacher. Meanwhile, Rodney's Uncle Louie Larimore and his mail-order bride-to-be, Mademoseille Sans Souci, arrive in town. A double wedding is about to take place when Rodney is accused of being the head of a gang of cattle thieves. Just as he is about to be hung, the mail-order fiancee, who is in reality a male detective dressed in woman's clothes, arrives on the scene with a posse and arrests the real gang. All ends well for Rodney and his school teacher sweetheart.

In addition to the on-again off-again loss of Turpin at Sennett, was the loss on September 29th, 1924 of mainman F. Richard Jones who found a similar occupation with Mack's closest comedy competition, Hal Roach.

In December after completing **The Wild Goose Chaser** (1/18/25), and with a few completed comedies in the Pathe cans and ready for release, unbeknownst to the public, Turpin retired. Carrie had very recently suffered two strokes of apoplexy and became a hopeless invalid. To help his wife he stayed home. On April 9th, 1925 Turpin announced officially that he had decided to quit the screen. His retirement was made imperative, he explained, by the serious illness of his wife, according to the press at that time.

MPW reviewed The Wild Goose Chaser:
Ben Turpin fans will find that comedian's latest for Mack Sennett to be replete with Turpin grimaces and Turpin stunts. It is about as funny a two-reeler as he has ever turned out. In this comedy Turpin is a 'great' hunter. He has guns ranging from a popper to a Springfield. One is a double-barrel affair, only the barrels separate when the comedian has "two birds to kill." Madeline Hurlock, in the role of the hunter's wife, follows Turpin through marshland and heather until a "friend" of her husband suggests that she flee with him. The flight includes a picture show and what they see makes them decide to return and tear up a note to the hunter. The hunter picks up the note and after shooting-up the house in Turpin style, he and his wife agree to forget about hunting and estrangement.

In his next release, **A Raspberry Romance** (3/1/25), Rodney St. Clair, an actor, is told to get a new act before night or leave town. A lawyer plans to marry his sweetheart in order to get her money. While Rodney is rehearsing a new act, the lawyer falsely tells him his sweetheart is locked in the home of Leo Mallet, the lawyer's partner. Leo catches Rodney in a room with his beautiful wife. He chases him into a bedroom which turns out to be on the stage of a local theater. After a fight Rodney wins his sweetheart, and the audience, thinking it all a part of the show, applaud loudly.

MPW thought that:
Followers of Ben Turpin will like this Mack Sennett subject featuring the cross-eyed hero. Ben is to marry Blanche, who is somewhat heftier than himself, and tries to make good as a singer on the old home Opera House stage, being greeted with vegetables. Circumstantial evidence points to his having vamped a married woman, and the husband pursues him onto the stage. There, the audience applauds Ben's frenzied attempts at escape and the husband's pistol shots, thinking them drama. Finally Ben's gigantic wife-to-be effects a rescue. This is a good comedy.

Writer Dorothy Donnell was quick to elaborate on Ben's retirement in her The Lonely Clown, The Greatest Love Story of Hollywood:

Ben Turpin has retired.
Or rather Ben Turpin, the comedian with the toe-in eyes, the long stringy neck and the trick moustache, is playing another role these days with an audience of one. And he is giving his best performance, though the only applause is a sick woman's voice, calling in the flat accents of the deaf, "Ben, where are you? I want you, Ben."
Since last December, when his wife, an invalid for years, had grown so

The Turpin home at Cannon Drive in Beverly Hills.

much worse that she could not bear him out of her sight, hardly out of her reach, the Sennett studio has caught only fleeting glimpses of Ben on such rare occasions as he could steal away from home for an hour or two to visit his old haunts.

If there is a wistfulness in his comic eyes as he watched his old friends, nobody knows it, for Ben speaks cheerily.

"What's the good of all the money I got if it can't make my wife well? She's all that counts. As long as she needs me, the movies can go hang. I'm tired of acting anyhow.

"We're going to travel till we can find health for her. Maybe we'll go across to that place in France – Lourdes, where folks leave their crutches. If one novena isn't enough, we'll make two of them – three. Yes, sir, when she's well enough to take the trip, we'll go to France. And when she's better, I'll be back."

His last picture (The Marriage Circus) has just been released, but Ben has not seen it. He is playing cook and housemaid and nurse these days. When they are not wandering from Palm Springs to the mountains in search for health for his wife, they are spending their evenings in the little apartment, Mrs. Turpin lying always on her side, Ben listening to the radio, talking the scanty talk of the long-married.

In **The Marriage Circus** (4/12/25), Rodney St. Clair (Ben) is about to be married to Madeline Hurlock. Through a keyhole he sees his rival kissing his bride-to-be. Rodney surrenders. The wedding takes place, but Madeline is kidnapped by one of her other admirers. There is a wild chase through the streets. Rodney's mother is chasing him with a horsewhip. He finally unites Madeline and her lover and is forgiven by his mother.

MPW wrote: For a two reeler, Mack Sennett has a knock-out in The Marriage Circus. Ben Turpin heads the cast of established screen comedians. Louise Carver as the aggressive mother and Ben as the dutiful and lovelorn son form a couple in this comedy that should weaken almost any audience with laughter. Madeline, the "Pathé Vamp," busts Ben's heart when she turns him down at the church for another beau. Ben, in order to blot out the blightly past, does a "Ben Hur" with a couple of horses. The wedding party pursues him in several cars during the course of which the bride is stolen by another admirer. It so happens that Ben's horses collide with the taxicab in which reposes the abducted damsel and he unconsciously effects her rescue. In our estimation Turpin is at his best in The Marriage Circus.

During his "retirement," Ben managed to knock off a couple of small free-lance roles in two features, Hogan's Alley, directed by his old friend Roy Del Ruth, and Steel Preferred directed by James P. Hogan and starring Vera Reynolds, William Boyd, and others. Time magazine wrote in their Jan 4, 1926 issue, "The presence of Ben Turpin as a bartender would make this film for some people. But Mr. Turpin is one of the few actors who are incomprehensively absent from the screen much of the time. The play is not, however, a cross-eyed comedy. It is a love story with a steel-mill background and fair enough of its ilk."

After these couple free-lance appearances Ben canceled all his motion-picture engagements. He turned down offers from producers that would have brought him a quarter of a million dollars. He began a vigil at the bedside of the invalid. He carried her in his arms from room to room. When her strength was such that she could be taken outdoors, he placed her in a wheel chair and wheeled her about for blocks in the California sunshine. Sometimes he wheeled his wife up to the intersection of Santa Monica Boulevard and Western Avenue and there placed her comfortably in the shade. Then he used to go to the traffic button in the center of the street and ask the traffic cop to let him relieve him for a while. For an hour or more the comedian used to direct the movement of cars and people. It helped to relax his tired nerves.

MRS. BEN TURPIN DIES; BEN DEVOTED TO HER

FILM COMEDIAN SPENT NEARLY YEAR AT BEDSIDE OF INVALID
LEFT STUDIO FOR HOME

Mrs. Carrie LeMieux-Turpin, 44, former actress and wife of Ben Turpin, screen comedian, died at her home in Hollywood, Cal., October 1. Mrs. Turpin had been an invalid for more than a year following a stroke of paralysis at that time, having had three others prior to her death. Turpin has been at her bedside constantly from early last December, forsaking his work at the Sennett studio.

Mrs. Turpin was a native of Quebec, Canada. The couple were married in Chicago 17 years ago, with Mrs. Turpin for sometime afterward working on the stage and screen with her husband. Besides her husband, a father and brother living in Michigan survive.

Funeral services were held here at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, October 3, with burial in Forest Lawn Cemetery.

Variety, October 7, 1925

MRS. TURPIN OF FILMS DIES

Comedians Husband's Ten Months Vigil at Sickbed Ended

Hollywood, Cal., Oct. 2 (AP) – Ben Turpin's long vigil at the bedside of his invalid wife was at an end today. The motion picture comedian abandoned his work at the studios when Carrie LeMieux Turpin became seriously ill last December, and the call of the camera was unheeded month after month as he cared for for the woman who accepted no ministrations but his.

Yesterday death ended her suffering. The Turpins were married eighteen years ago and Mrs. Turpin worked with her husband on the legitimate stage and later in pictures. They were brought to Hollywood ten years ago by Charlie Chaplin.

When Mrs. Turpin lost her hearing after an attack of influenza two years ago her husband took her to the Shrine of Saint Anne de Beaupre near her birthplace in the Province of Quebec hoping that she might receive healing. Since last December she suffered several strokes of paralysis. Funeral services will be held tomorrow at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament. Burial will be in Forest Lawn Cemetery.

New York Times, Oct. 3, 1925, pg 15

On the first day of October 1925, death came to Mrs. Turpin late in the afternoon. The chapter was finished. From everywhere in Hollywood there poured wreaths of flowers and there came telegrams and messages.

BEN TURPIN IS HIS WIFE'S SOLE HEIR

Los Angeles, Oct. 14 (AP) – Ben Turpin, motion picture comedian, was announced as the sole heir of his wife, Carrie Turpin, in a will filed for probate yesterday. Mrs. Turpin, who died two weeks ago left an estate valued at about $63,000.

New York Times, Oct. 15, 1925, pg 37

Only a few days later Ben hauled out his old make-up kit and began replenishing the stock of grease paint. He straightened the stubby mustache he so long had worn. He took the creases from the wigs, looked up his slapstick shoes, and sent word to Mack Sennett:
"I'm ready!"
He is back again – the buffoon, the jester, the clown, taking the raps on the head from the yucca sticks, the falls from the windows, the flying custard pies and the knocks.
The comedian, fifty-eight years old, is going it alone in the glare of the Cooper-Hewitts.
His example is one which is revered and admired by every player in Hollywood. It is one of the most splendid pieces of devotion ever recorded in that city where, too often, marital obligations are made on a suggestion and discarded at will.

On November 7, 1925 Ben signed a contract with Sennett to appear in eight successive two-reelers with production commencing the third week of January 1926, and compensation at $3000 a week.
Only a few days later on the evening of November 12th, Turpin was operated on in a Santa Monica hospital for acute appendicitis and was reported resting well the following day. Attending physicians said another twenty-four hours would determine if his recovery was to be complete.

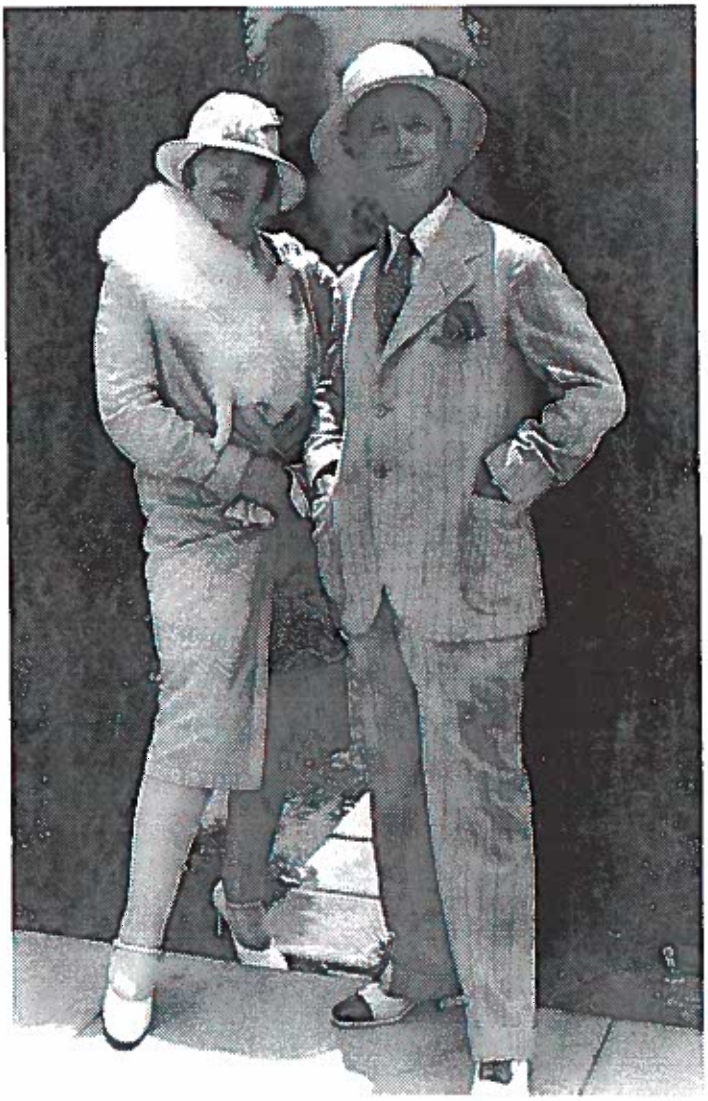
Ben Takes A Dare

It now comes out that it was trying to get gay with the old Sennett swimming tank that proved the undoing of Ben Turpin. The day he came back to work from his long retirement after his wife's death, one of the studio directors dared him to dive in. So in went Ben with all his clothes on. The next thing that happened to Ben was a hurry-up trip to the hospital where his appendix was sawed off. He is well again and back at the studio, but he walks respectfully and widely around the studio swimming tank.

Source unknown, 1926

These movie actors have a fatal fascination. Ben Turpin, who has been a widower for less than a year, has found a lady to share his lonely home. It is said that he met her at the sanitarium during his late wife's illness, and her sympathy for Ben in his grief won the heart of the comedy sheik.

Source unknown, 1926



Ben and Babette Elizabeth Dietz, July 1926, the new Mrs. Ben Turpin.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

Ben's Second Marriage
His Return to Sennett
The Weiss Brothers
Artclass Comedies
and more coming to
Issue #7, Jan. 2003

PARAMOUNT-MACK SENNETT COMEDY

Continued from our second issue

His Hidden Purpose

A Paramount-Mack Sennett Comedy (prod. #7)
Two reels (1,535 ft), silent MS9 (P3309)
Released January 27, 1918
No copyright registered
work title: *Farm Story* started Oct 9, completed Dec 18, 1917

Directed by Clarence Badger & Eddie Cline
Cinematography by Fred W. Jackman & J. R. Lockwood

Cast:
Chester Conklin (Who Lived by His Wife), Marie Prevost (The Girl in the Case), Gene Rogers (Her Father Who Made Mistakes), Neal Burns (Her Sweetheart), Cliff Bowes (An Innocent Convict), George H. Binns (A Farmer Who Lived in the Country), Slim Summerville (A Cop), Jack Cooper (A Minister), Laura LaVarnie (His Wife), Pepper, the Cat (Herself)

Review: MPW, February 9, 1918, page 867:
There is good action all through *His Hidden Purpose*, in one group of scenes there is Marie Prevost just herself alone in nature and a pool. Finally the closing group of scenes has the best comedy storm that ever blew lovers into each others arms or made it necessary to bail hard to keep an automobile afloat on a mountain road. One specially good thing is a picture of Chester Conklin cranking his Ford way down in the depths under the waves. I'll bet he didn't have much of a water thirst after playing that particular bit. It is a better picture than even *The Kitchen Lady* recently released, and that is making a decided hit.

Watch Your Neighbor

A Paramount-Mack Sennett Comedy (prod. #9)
Two reels (1,550 ft), silent MS10 (P3310)
Released February 10, 1918
No copyright registered
work title: *Undertaker Story* started Nov. 15 1917, completed Jan. 8, 1918

Directed by Victor Heerman
Cinematography by Fred W. Jackman & Hans F. Koenekamp

Cast:
Charlie Murray (An Undertaker), Wayland Trask (His Neighbor, the Doctor), Mary Thurman (His Wife), Gene Rogers (cop), Frank J. Coleman, Edgar Kennedy (An Innocent Bystander), Ben Turpin, Cliff Bowes, Billy Armstrong, Albert Gillespie, Harry Booker, Gonda Durand, Roxanna McGowan, Marvel Rea, Vera Steadman, Ethel Teare

Synopsis:
Mr. Sennett has chosen for his two leading laugh producers in this subject the somber characters of an undertaker and a doctor, which is played by Charles Murray and Wayland Trask, respectively, and the laughable situations unfolded are intensified by the seriousness of their calling.
The dispenser of pills and the purveyor of coffins formed a secret alliance for mutual profit, and took offices adjoining, so that when a patient called on the doctor, the undertaker would display his wares to the prospective decedent. They failed to take the doctor's wife (Mary Thurman) into their confidence, and when a wan and apparently dying patient comes staggering into the office during the doctor's absence, his better half prescribes so well that the man is immediately restored to health.
Unique methods of treatment are introduced by the doctor in treating his patients. The production was directed by Victor Heerman under the supervision of Mack Sennett. Trask is the strongman of the films, and in Watch Your Neighbor performs miraculous feats.

Review: MPW, February 16, 1918, page 1003:
Charles Murray has a serious job in *Watch Your Neighbor*. That is, of course, it would be a serious job for the average male individual, but Charlie, as an undertaker, provides mirth for others. He has an associate in business – a next door neighbor – and partner in crime, as it were, in a doctor, played by Wayland Trask. Mary Thurman is the wife of the doctor and the object of admiration on the part of the undertaker.
The picture may lack the 100 per cent touch of the Sennett craftsmanship, but, nevertheless, it contains its share of stunts of the hair-raising sort and a good bunch of laughs at that.
It is the over-anxiety on the part of the undertaker to enroll the doctor among his "uncomplaining" former customers and thereby make clearer his path to the heart of the wife that starts things toward the real finish. Here it is that the Innocent Stranger, called in by the wife to eject the persistent undertaker, makes the mistake of his life and slugs the returning husband. And the wife, as in *One Round O'Brien*, from behind the curtains swings the big mallet on the head of the doctor instead of on that of the undertaker. Mix-up there is in large chunks. Of course, the police get in on the party, and parachuting and automobile chases follow. Watch Your Neighbor is pretty good comedy.

Sheriff Nell's Tussle

A Paramount-Mack Sennett Comedy (prod. #11)
Two reels (1,730 ft), silent MS12 (P3312)
Released February 24, 1918
originally schedualed for March 10, 1918
Copyright February 22, 1918
work title: *Library Story*

Directed by William S. Campbell
Cinematography by Fred W. Jackman & Kenneth G. MacLean

Cast:
Polly Moran (Still the Pride of Triggerville), Ben Turpin (Still After Her), Billy Armstrong (After the Money), Gonda Durand (Only His Wife), Al

McKinnon (Who Needs Watching), Frank J. Coleman (Armstrong's Accomplice), Gene Rogers, Pat Kelly

Synopsis:
Sheriff Nell (Polly Moran) is one those rare creatures of the West who is able to shoot up a town with one hand while she powders her nose with a rabbits foot with the other. Coupled with her prowess, she has a tender heart, and this often leads to trouble.
Two slickers drifted into Triggerville from the palpitating desert one day, on the trail of a plethoric safe they proposed to crack at the first favorable opportunity. It was a mission that required the most astute calculation to push to success and to that end, the scoundrels resorted to the blackest treachery, first, to escape the vigilance of Nell, and next, to render nil the chances of detection while they are engaged at their nefarious job.
Triggerville has a free library and Nell is its warmest supporter. When they learned this, the slickers arranged a theatrical performance in aid of the library fund. That started the whole trouble, for the project threw Sheriff Nell off her balance, as it were. The entire population of the town flocked en masse to the theater, so that everybody who was not bed-ridden was present when the marvelous sleight-of-hand performer, who was in the safe cracking scheme, began his performance.
In the end, Nell takes chase after the villains with a vengeance, pursuing them to the big city to encompass their destruction at every hazard.

IT PAYS TO EXERCISE

A Paramount-Mack Sennett Comedy (prod. #14)
Two reels (1,830 ft), silent MS11 (P3311)
Released March 10, 1918
originally scheduled for February 24, 1918
Copyright February 15, 1918
work title: *The Judge Story*

Directed by F. Richard Jones
Cinematography by J. R. Lockwood

Cast:
Chester Conklin (Mostly Looking for Work), Alice Maison (His Sweetheart, a Manicure Girl), Harry Booker (The Judge), Eva Thatcher (His Wife), Slim Summerville (A Flirt), Gene Rogers (Juryman), Charles Lynn (The Bailiff), Eleanor Field, Vera Steadman, Laura LaVarnie, George Jeske, Teddy, the dog (himself), Phyllis Haver, Roxanna McGowan, Marvel Rea

Synopsis:
Chester Conklin plays the part of a man beset by many troubles. He was always starting something he couldn't finish. Chet started out as a salesman for some athletic apparatus. Along came Slim Summerville with a check in hand to buy the goods, but Chester could not be content just to take the money and deliver the order. He had to give a demonstration. The result was that Slim spread humiliation, chagrin and dismay all over the establishment; beat up little Chester then went away without buying anything. After that Chet went to work in a dentist's office where misfortune and adventure followed him with relentlessness. But when Slim comes into the same dentists office, Conklin sees his chance for a terrible revenge. Unfortunately for Chester, Slim escaped the slaughter and the vengeance fell upon the judge.
Later on, Chester is brought into court and there upon the bench in judicial robes, he saw the little man who had been the victim for the revenge that had been cooked up for Slim. It happened, however, that the judge was having a few troubles of his own, and at the very moment when the judicial wrath was about to descend upon Chester, Slim happened to discover that his missing pants adorned the judicial legs.

THOSE ATHLETIC GIRLS

A Paramount-Mack Sennett Comedy (prod. #13)
Two reels (1,760 ft), silent MS13 (P3313)
Released March 24, 1918
Copyright March 5, 1918
work title: College Story

Directed by Eddie Cline
Cinematography by Phil H. Whitman

Cast:
Louise Fazenda (The Janitress), Jack Cooper (Her Husband & Assistant), Laura LaVarnie (Head of the School), Glen Cavender (Her Secretary), Ethel Teare (An Instructress), Phyllis Haver, Vera Steadman & Marvel Rea (The Ringleaders), Teddy, the Dog (Himself), Roxanna McGowan, Josephine Banks, Edith Valk, Lillian Biron, Virginia Nightingale, Eleanor Field, Marie Prevost, Slim Summerville, Alice Maison, Gonda Durand

Synopsis:
This was certainly a busy afternoon in the girls' boarding school conducted by "Ma" LaVarnie. In looking after the good conduct of her bevy of lovely girls, the preceptress had troubles enough to spare; but attached to the establishment was a janitor with a jealous wife armed with a broom. It may be remarked parenthetically that a girls' boarding school is no place for a susceptible janitor with a jealous wife.
Complicated with her green-eyed disposition, Louise Fazenda, the jealous frau, had artistic aspirations which told her she could be an interpretive dancer, which she displays in the schools' dormitory. As though this were not trouble enough, a fire broke out and the trusted secretary of the school seized this opportunity to exercise a secret talent he had long cherished, robbing safes. The result was painful to the villain.
One of the funniest scenes ever shown in a Paramount-Sennett Comedy is an indoor baseball game between two teams of boarding school girls. There is a boxing match between two of the prettiest Mack Sennett girls, which is a scream.

Review: MPW
This number of the Paramount-Mack Sennett Comedies, *Those Athletic Girls*, will no doubt be voted by the general public one of the best of its kind. It contains most of the things that comedy fans like from the custard pie to the more original and pleasing members of the cast, including the cat and dog and a number of ferocious looking lions. Louise Fazenda is the featured member and does herself "proud." She is one of those rare finds

who combine acrobatic skill with charm of personality and the essentials of the comedienne.
Edward Cline is the director to whom is due the credit of an exceedingly clever piece of work. He has succeeded in presenting without offense a group of twelve to fifteen pretty girls arrayed in brief athletic suits, and has instilled into this particular portion of the picture a delightful smattering comedy which has been extracted largely through facial expression. At one time a couple of the girls entertain the others with a boxing bout, and in another instance an indoor baseball game in which everybody from the cat and the dog up indulges presents excruciatingly funny situations. The good old standby swimming pool is also in evidence.
The picture's biggest laugh occurs when Sennett's Great Dane dog relinquishes his grip on a man he is rescuing from a slippery roof to chase a cat.

FRIEND HUSBAND

A Paramount-Mack Sennett Comedy (prod. #12)
Two reels (1,787 ft), silent MS14 (P3314)
Released April 7, 1918
Copyright March 23, 1918
work title: *Too Many Babies*

Directed by Walter Wright
Cinematography by Fred W. Jackman & Hans F. Koenekamp

Cast:
Charlie Murray (A Bachelor), Wayland Trask (A Husband), Mary Thurman (His Wife), Gene Rogers (His Uncle), Harry Gribbon (A Visitor), Erle C. Kenton (A Detective), Laura LaVarnie (Charlie's Housekeeper), Teddy and Pepper (Themselves), Davy Lee (The Baby), James Donnelly, Alice Maison, Marie Prevost, Marvel Rea, Eva Thatcher

Synopsis:
An old uncle who was willing to give ten thousand dollars to see a baby in the family of a nephew he had never met created considerable disturbance in Wayland Trask's happy home. The fact that Charles Murray, an amorous bachelor, lived just across the hall also complicated matters, for Mr. Trask had a beautiful young wife. When it was discovered that Uncle was about to arrive, there was a wild scramble to produce the necessary infant. Wayland decided that he must dig up a baby if he had to kidnap one. Murray, the interested bachelor, decided he, too, would dig up a baby if he had to kidnap it, and Teddy, the dog, ever so faithful to his master, Wayland, did kidnap a baby, actually a midget. Too many babies appeared at a most embarrassing time and under most embarrassing circumstances.

SAUCY MADELINE

A Paramount-Mack Sennett Comedy (prod. #16)
Two reels (1,720 ft), silent MS15 (P3315)
Released April 21, 1918
Copyright April 6, 1918
work title: *Bowling Alley Story*

Directed by F. Richard Jones
Cinematography by Fred W. Jackman & J. R. Lockwood

Cast:
Ben Turpin (A Rolling Stone Out of Work), Charlie Lynn (The Busiest Man in Town), Polly Moran (His Butterfly Wife), Frank J. Coleman (The Bartender), Harry Gribbon (A First Nighter), Wayland Trask (The Ice Man), Jack Cooper (The Drunk), George Jeske (Villain in the Play), Gonda Durand, Alice Maison

Synopsis:
Ben Turpin enters a bar and produces his own bottle of booze from which he imbibes as well as his own silverware and plate, which he stacks with sandwiches from the saloons free lunch counter. Annoyed by this, the boss, Charlie Lynn, orders Ben to work helping the giant iceman, Wayland Trask, bring the huge blocks in. After this chore, Ben is next put to work in the adjacent bowling alley where he meets Lynn's wife, Polly Moran, and they bowl a little game. Jealous Charlie enters the scene and gets in on the game which now is for money. With each throw, by some strange force, Ben's ball rolls down the alley from left to right and into the gutter while Lynn throws strikes. We next see drunk Jack Cooper below the alley wielding a large magnet at his ceiling manipulating the bowling balls above. Cooper soon gets the throwing order mixed up and Ben takes the lead, and the winnings, until two anarchists enter the business and end the first reel with a large explosion.
The second reel begins within the confines of a seated theater audience whom are all prepared to watch a show featuring Polly, Harry Gribbon and Turpin, the latter who is also prop boy and one-man orchestra. All along, Charlie has been suspicious of Ben and Polly's attentions which is further justified during the stage production, their romantic emotions are just too real for Lynn. Sneaking backstage, Charlie chases Ben throughout the theater, onto the street then above the rooftops. Suddenly they crash through a skylight falling into a ladies Turkish bath and are too exhausted to run any further as the film fades out.

Review: MPW
A Sennett farce pure and simple, with story and characterization made subordinate to incident and ingenious mechanism. Polly Moran really has very limited opportunity to display her genial activity, business going largely to Ben Turpin, the man with the squint, a squint at two such decided angles that cameramen get nervous attempting a close-up. The marvel of Sennett is that he does not repeat himself to anything like an extant to be expected and excused. He presents something new and original in mechanical devices with every release his font of invention seeming never to run dry. The marvelous perigrinations of balls in a bowling alley and the idea of showing a man melting into a large ice cake which falls on him are the most recent accomplishments of fertile invention, both shown in *Saucy Madeline*.

TO BE CONTINUED!

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